THE CHANGING DRAMA

BY

ARCHIBALD HENDERSON

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THE CHANGING DRAMA

CONTRIBUTIONS AND TENDENCIES

BY

ARCHIBALD HENDERSON

AUTHOR OF

"GEORGE BERNARD SHAW: HIS LIFE AND WORKS"
"EUROPEAN DRAMATISTS," ETC.

CINCINNATI
STEWART & KIDD COMPANY
1919

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JUL 17 1919

no 1

I lay this book upon her shrine
Whose lifted torch has lighted mine.

Sweet Heart—great Heart of tenderness:
Strong Hands to help—dear Hands to bless:
Clear Brain whose vision dwells in light:
Fire Spirit, wingèd flame of white:
Oh! Soul—true Sword Excalibur:
Body—fit sheath for soul of her!

I lay this book upon her shrine—
Hers—since herself has made it mine.

INTRODUCTION TO NEW EDITION

This book appeared in the year which saw the outbreak of the Great War. A new edition now appears in the year which bids fair at this moment to mark the conclusion of peace. At the time when this book was completed, the new movement in the drama was marked by rich promise and great strength. Yet within a few short months thereafter, there could be observed something like a complete arrest of productive movement in the drama, in the greatest drama producing countries of the world. The arts of peace succumbed to the science of war. Theatres closed their doors; dramatists and poets exchanged the pen for the sword. After two years of war, a distinguished English critic wrote me "A new vision has come into life altogether. At this moment drama is dead in this country. Intellectualism itself is dead. We have become a nation of warriors, strategists and patriots."

What the new era following the war may bring forth in literature, we cannot say. Before the war was over, the query was being raised in regard to

the permanent changes likely to be wrought in the fabric of world literature through the influence of war and its atmosphere, the challenge to faith and the triumph of democracy. However such a query be answered, there is little reason to doubt that a new beginning in dramatic history will date from the year 1919. This book appears opportunely, then, in a new edition — affording as it does a survey of the modern dramatic movement to a point at which the Great War put a period and exhibiting the foundations upon which the new dramatist must build.

ARCHIBALD HENDERSON.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina,
April 28, 1919.

PREFATORY NOTE

The contemporary drama awaits its historian and interpreter. There is no dearth of critical studies of the drama of the period. But the published works deal for the most part with individual figures, or else with movements limited either to a brief period of time or to a single country. Every one who is truly interested in the drama as a life form, in reference to the theater and to literature, must realize the need for the work which, from the critical and historical standpoints, takes account of the drama during the past half-century and more, as the symbol of a general movement in human consciousness.

For this great spiritual drama of to-day is warp and woof of the fabric of modern life. At the door of all our hearts knocks this new drama of pity and revolt. Pity for the lot of those less favored than ourselves, revolt against the injustices of the social order—these sentiments of social altruism and social justice animate most modern literature and most modern thinking. The drama of our era has played a pre-eminent rôle in stirring us to the assertion of individual

freedom, awaking our sense of social obligation, and holding the balance true between our individual rights and our social duties.

In the present volume, the attempt is made, on a very modest scale, to discover and to disclose the real contributions of the modern school of dramatists. These are studied primarily in relation to the life and the thinking of to-day. The evolution of form and technic, the re-alignment of criticism in regard to dramatic, esthetic, and ethical values, the general widening of outlook, the enlarged social content, the appraisal of genuine contributions, and the analysis of prevailing tendencies in the drama—such, within definitely chosen limits, is the intended scope of the present volume. From this scheme the poetic drama is excluded. Because, in my judgment, the poetic drama of the contemporary period, for all its beauties and ingenuities, to which I have been always ready to pay tribute, embodies no distinctive or considerable contribution to the art or the practice of play-writing.

Within the limits set, this book is believed to be the first work yet to appear in any language dealing with the contemporary drama, not as a kingdom subdivided between a dozen leading playwrights, but as a great movement, exhibiting the evolutional growth of the human spirit and the enlargement of the domain of esthetics. Perhaps

it may serve, in a sense, as a reflection of the spirit and tendency of the life of our era, which the contemporary drama has sought and still seeks so faithfully to interpret.

ARCHIBALD HENDERSON.

CHAPEL HILL, N. C.,
JUNE, 19, 1914.

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THE CHANGING DRAMA

"The critic will be a small genius, the artist a great genius; the one will have the strength of ten, the other of a hundred; the former, in order to raise himself to the altitude of the latter, will have need of his assistance; but the nature of both must be the same. In order to judge Dante, we must raise ourselves to his level: let it be well understood that empirically we are not Dante, nor Dante we; but in that moment of judgment and contemplation, our spirit is one with that of the poet, and in that moment we and he are one single thing. In this identity alone resides the possibility that our little souls can unite with the great souls, and become great with them, in the universality of the spirit."—BENEDETTO CROCE.

I

DRAMA IN THE NEW AGE

"What is the problem of culture? To live and to work in the noblest strivings of one's nation and of humanity. Not only, therefore, to receive and to learn, but to live. To free one's age and people from wrong tendencies, to have one's ideal before one's eyes."—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE.

"Art knows the true ideal of our times, and tends towards it."—LYOF TOLSTOY.

THE contemplation of any period of human activity at first sight reveals a vast network of intersecting interests. We observe a web interwoven with apparently independent threads of ideas and passions, of ideals and sentiments. This is especially the case in the domain of esthetics, where evolutionary process is continually retarded, arrested, or accelerated by the pristine energy of the human factor. Every artist imparts the illusion of individuality. The ego, conditioned by race, place, and moment, seems to operate within the prescribed circle of his immediate limitation. Yet viewed in historical perspective, the work of art inevitably falls into definite position in the creation of the cosmic pattern of world literature. The tragi-comedy of Ibsen,

the symbolist drama of Maeterlinck, the sociologic comedy of Shaw, the motionless pictures of Tchekhov, the lyric romances of D'Annunzio, the thesis-melodramas of Echegaray, the temperamental comediettas of Schnitzler, significant as illustrations, co-operate in bodying forth the variegated design of the contemporary drama.

A work of literary criticism is a true work of art only on the condition that it disclose in full illumination the guiding and shaping principles which express the true spiritual meaning of the epoch. Beneath the welter and confusion of conflicting and apparently dissociate literary phenomena, criticism must reveal the life forces pulsing through the literature of to-day. Only thus may the critic render intelligible and coherent the contemporary epoch in human consciousness. Only thus may the critic truly appraise literature as an organic expression of the growth of the human spirit.

A critical survey of the literature of the past three-quarters of a century or less projects into the light the vast debt that literature viewed as a factor in national culture and world civilization owes to science and the doctrine of evolution. To give precision to our ideas, let us especially direct our attention to the contemporary drama, that branch of literature which is the subject of our inquiry. In the world of industry, the barriers

have fallen one by one beneath the patient, persistent blows of science, of invention, of discovery. 'Twas but yesterday that the American awoke with a start to discover the disappearance of the frontier. Civilization had pushed on to the farthest verge. The marvel of the Atlantic cable pales before the miracle of wireless telegraphy. A vast shudder shook England when a Frenchman obliterated with his aeroplane the ancient barrier of the Channel. The imaginative fancy of Jules Verne is dwarfed by the actual achievements in world circumnavigation of this very hour. Through the transforming magic of science, the nations of the world stand in perpetual intercommunication. Customs, costumes, habits of thought, modes of expression, once peculiar to locality and to nationality, are rapidly becoming world property. Cosmic solidarity is one of the supreme facts, the fertile contributions of the epoch. Only industry and research have fully realized this accomplishment. Trade is bounded only by the limitation of the globe. Science progresses unhaltingly, enlarging the domain of knowledge through the simultaneous scientific contributions of research everywhere.

The scientist, be he mathematician, chemist, physicist, biologist, geologist, fixes his attention endlessly upon a single subject. That one sublime subject, upon which the eyes of science are fixed,

is Nature. This cosmic example, as well as the means for applying its lessons to other fields, is the example which science now sets literature. The artist in all ages has striven to express and reveal the soul of the individual. Within our epoch, the new spirit of science has breathed into the body of the artist the breath of the world's life. Art and literature are beginning to speak with the international mind, the cosmopolitan soul. We feel in the air that "epoch of world literature" which Goethe heralded and summoned. Nationality has not lost its meaning. The artist still recognizes that the more completely he realizes the national soul in literature the more surely will his work cross national frontiers. At the same time, science has taught the artist that a consciousness of the feelings common to the citizens of civilized nations is more potent in winning the widest hearing and in attaining the most lasting repute than a consciousness simply of the feelings peculiar to his fellow-countrymen. Slowly precipitating everywhere, in the retort of contemporary life, is a basic substance of cosmopolitan culture, ideas, and inclinations.

Contemporary literature is unique in one differentiating feature. The world author during his own lifetime has actually attained the hearing of a world audience. Nay more, he has but to speak in the accents of genius and the words echo

from the remotest fastnesses of the world. The genial humanity of a Mark Twain's good humor is reflected in countless tongues, even in the dialect of the savage. The trumpet challenge of a Rudyard Kipling resounds through the bounds of civilization. The bon mots of a Bernard Shaw are immediately caught up and repeated in New York and Berlin, Paris and St. Petersburg. The philosopher who is perchance an artist as well, a Friedrich Nietzsche, a William James, or a Henri Bergson, gives cosmopolitan vogue to his theories and discoveries, and enriches the thinking of today with the terminology and concept of the Superman, of Pragmatism, and of Creative Evolution. A Henrik Ibsen, isolate, cloistral, moves forward for all people the boundary posts of the world's drama. A Lyof Tolstoy austerely condemns the classics of the world, even his own; and points to the future in his formulation of a new meaning for art. A Richard Wagner prophesies the new art of a new social order, in which the "art work of the future" shall be the expression of the collective energy of a whole age, enlightened, individually, socially, morally.

It is no longer possible to speak with the same significance, as formerly, of English literature or French literature or Scandinavian literature. Their one-time individuality is modified through elements common to all. Criticism itself, since

Taine, has become scientific—and so, cosmopolitan—in its aspect. The work of Strindberg stirs Paris; Sudermann wrings tears from Chicago; Shaw ravishes Berlin with his mocking laughter; Brieux confounds New York with his unashamed social antiseptics. Criticism frankly accepts these phenomena as typical of the new spirit. It is not that the artist loses his individuality, his sense of race, his consciousness of environment. These things have always been felt by the artist, more or less keenly, in all ages. There is, however, in this modern air that the artist breathes, something which imparts a more poignant sensitiveness to the pressure of the force of solidarity. Even in such a matter as technic, the artist realizes to-day as never before the imperative obligation to measure up to the most advanced demands of architectonics, of dramaturgics. Culture is coming to mean, not merely the enlargement of the actual domain of knowledge, but, what is perhaps no less important in the advancement of civilization, universal diffusion of knowledge of all great intellectual and spiritual phenomena.

The dramatist must run the gauntlet of merciless inspection and criticism at the hands of his fellow-craftsmen. Furthermore, with a public ever attaining to higher levels of sophistication and developing more rigorous canons of taste

through contact with the best representative examples afforded by other nationalities, the dramatist of to-day must possess not only wide knowledge of his art, but astute mastery of its technic. Above all, with a knowledge of human nature more circumstantial, more minute, than ever before—a knowledge contributed perhaps not less by science than by psychology, philosophy, or literature—the contemporary auditor is quick to seize, quick to condemn, a lapse on the part of the dramatic artist from the fundamental verities —the insuperable maxima, the irreducible minima —of human experience and potentiality. The dramatic artists of to-day, of all races and all climes, have a sense of common purpose, a certain unity of aim. This may best be described as the intention of advancing the cause of civilization.

It is just at this moment that our eyes are opened to the inner significance of this discovery. The ancient Greeks realized that man was a political animal. The France of Molière realized that man was a social animal. The limitation of Molière—a limitation which sometimes his genius enabled him to transcend—was inherent in his reverence for society. It was not the structure of society itself which was at fault, in Molière's view. It was man who, in violating the laws of society, originated his own tragedy, his own ruin. Molière teaches man the ancient lesson that he

must not violate the fundamental principles of life and that his most urgent need is to conform to nature. The guiding principle back of this human, this humane sentiment, is the social principle that society's claims must never be ignored. Man was not made for laws, conventions, morals, inhibitions of a thousand varieties. These laws, conventions, morals, inhibitions were made for man. Indeed, they were made in the interest of an artificial complex, perpetually in a state of flux and evolution, which we call society.

In a certain sense, there is just ground for the modern man's dissatisfaction with Shakespeare and his conception of the world. For Olympian that he was, Shakespeare was assuredly not what we are accustomed to call a social philosopher. Before sociology, Shakespeare was. His is a drama of supermen and superwomen; they move in grand silhouette against the sky-line of the universe. His heroes and heroines come nobly to the grapple with that force or power which is labeled Fate, Destiny, Providence, or the Divine Order. His dramas present the clash of the supreme struggle—Man at odds with the Universe. It may be admitted by the modern critic that Shakespeare created, in his dramatic hero, a more valid, a more credible superman than was ever previsaged in the convolute brain of a Nietzsche. The Shakespearean tragedy is a personal tragedy. We feel

both pity and terror in these spectacles of the disintegration of moral, the bankruptcy of character, the degeneration of will, the atrophy of conscience, the obsession of sexuality. In Shakespeare's conception of the tragic we discern a revolutionary sense of protest against the moral order of the universe. We are darkly aware of the delicate balancing of the divine scales in the passing of judgment upon a universe dense-packed with cruelty, hatred, injustice, failure.

In both Shakespeare and Molière there is lacking that differentiating quality which characterizes the dramatist of the contemporary era. With all his passionate sense of revolt against the tragic cast of the universal life, Shakespeare lacked any ingrained conviction of social organization as a giant participant in the tragedy of human destiny. With all his shrewd and sagacious exposure of folly, fraud, imposture, quackery, and personal hypocrisies, Molière never once bethought him of the crimes committed by society in the name of humanity. Whilst it may be urged with considerable justice that Shakespeare was no mere court sycophant, certainly it cannot be doubted that he was totally lacking in sympathy for the lot of the common man. With all his wit and raillery at the fantastic creatures of French social life, Molière exhibited deep-dyed racial respect for society, its interests, its laws,

its obligations. The era of social democracy was not yet. But it was inevitable in the course of civilization that a day must dawn upon a world grown sick of the individual, the confessor, the autobiographer. With that day came the philosophy of sociology. To-day the world is envisaged in social guise as a vast structure of social laws, formulas, traditions, erected by man in his own interest for the sake of the State, the Family, the Race.

The great discovery of modern life, the most potent influence which thus far has projected itself into contemporary consciousness, is the dawning suspicion, gradually solidified into belief and fortified into conviction, that society has become the tyrant of the universe. Error is imperfect knowledge. In the equation of truth certain indispensable factors are missing. Crime is not solely a religious or moral question. It is a social question. Indeed, crime may be defined as the product of imperfect social knowledge. In the equation of conduct certain indispensable social factors are missing. Not crime only, but the petty annoyances, the grave injustices, the hideous inconsistencies of life, must be laid at the door, not of the individual man, but of our social institutions.

The real progenitor of the plays of the modern era is not an individual, but the *Zeitgeist*. Thoughts which have been in the air, sentiments,

passions, predilections, emanating from advanced individuals with enlightened social consciences, become gradually disseminated, and slowly diffuse themselves throughout the world. Many thinkers, many idealists are responsible for the contemporary era. But there are four figures with accusing faces which emerge above the crowd of witnesses. *Les Misérables* was the first great beacon of fiction to light the path of the broken outcasts of society. George Eliot, positivist, sociologist in fiction, assisted in laying the foundations of this new fiction of tendency, the novel with a purpose—reformative, humanitarian purpose. Such fiction is popular in the original, undefiled sense—democratic—" of the people, by the people, for the people." This social fiction laid down as its first principle an enlightened conception of social duties, social obligations, and human brotherhood. The author of *Anna Karénina* it was who said: " However differently in form people belonging to our Christian world may define the destiny of man; whether they see it in human progress in whatever sense of the words, in the union of all men in a socialistic realm, or in the establishment of a commune; whether they look forward to the union of mankind under the guidance of one universal church, or to the federation of the world,—however various in form their definitions of the destination of human life may be, all

men in our times already admit that the highest well-being attainable by man is to be reached by their union with one another." As early as 1860, Henrik Ibsen, yet to write his monumental series of social dramas, was pointing out to the Norwegian government the educative influence of the drama. "The experience of all countries," he said, "has sufficiently established the fact that dramatic art, in every age in which it has been cultivated, has, in a higher degree than any other, shown itself an important factor in the education of the people—a very obvious explanation of which fact is to be found in the drama's more intimate and direct relation to reality; in other words, in its greater intelligibility and in its easier and more general accessibility to the whole people." Twenty years later he was writing these pregnant words: "A man shares the responsibility and the guilt of the society to which he belongs. Hence I once wrote:

> "To *live*—is to war with fiends
> That infest the brain and the heart;
> To *write*—is to summon one's self,
> And play the judge's part."

In the expression of such a view do we find a clue to the artistic revolution in the drama of our own day. To share the responsibility and the guilt of society is, at a single step, to arrive at the realization that society is the culprit. A

Shakespeare maintains that the fault is in us that we are underlings. An Ibsen asserts that the fault is in society. The most acute and enlightened intelligences of our period have devoted themselves to the demonstration of the fact that our social institutions are in the wrong. That is nothing more nor less than to convict mankind of social wrong-doing for which he himself is responsible. Social institutions are the work of man; and upon man falls the responsibility for their imperfect and wrongful workings, the injustices they foster, the social inequalities they create. The prime function of the dramatist of to-day is to bring man to a consciousness of his responsibility and to incite him to constructive measures for social reform.

It is incontestable that Molière was a social critic—in a sense. But certainly Molière was not a social critic in the sense in which the term is employed to-day. Molière's definition of comedy, in his preface to *Tartuffe*, is definitive in its exposition of Molière: "A comedy is nothing more than an ingenious poem which, by agreeable lessons, takes man to task for his defects." Comedy then, as Molière saw it, was an ironic mode of education and castigation of humanity for man's defects as an individual, even as an individual in society. The contemporary dramatist considers the drama an instrumentality for

showing man, whether by pleasant or unpleasant means, his fault as moral being, as social creature, as guilty partner in the defective business of modern social organization.

Such a conception brings us at once into sharp conflict with Molière's doctrine that the fundamental purpose of every work of art, the rule of all rules, is to please. The lesson of Tolstoy, of Dostoievsky, of Hugo, of Dumas *fils*, of George Eliot, Dickens, Ruskin, is that the work of art is moral in its essence and has for its fundamental purpose not pleasure, but edification, purification, social enlightenment. Such a conception automatically imparts to art a specifically moral and ethical basis. Emerson even goes so far as to aver that every fact has a two-fold appeal: to sensation on the one side, to morality on the other. Infinitely magnified is this appeal in the case of the drama, in which facts, carefully selected from the welter of life's purposelessness, are integrated by the playwright into a work of art. "Fine art," says so astute a critic of the drama as Bernard Shaw, "is the subtlest, the most seductive, the most effective means of moral propagandism in the world, excepting only the example of personal conduct; and I waive even this exception in favor of the art of the stage, because it works by exhibiting examples of personal conduct made intelligible and moving to crowds of unob-

servant, unreflecting people to whom real life means nothing." Oscar Wilde's most original contribution to criticism was the theory that life imitates art. And surely comparison of the waning influence of the church with the waxing influence of the theater as a guide to conduct is a conspicuous verification of Wilde's suggestive theory. Miss Jane Addams, who speaks with exact knowledge of the inner springs of conduct among certain social classes, has recently said: "In moments of moral crisis now the great theater-going public turns to the sayings of the hero who found himself in a similar plight. The sayings may not be profound, but they are at least applicable to conduct." Indeed, we may go even further and assert that people of all classes, in moments of emotional stress, often unconsciously reproduce the expressions which they have heard their favorite heroes, heroines, or even villains utter in like situations. Only a genius in the simple expression of elemental feeling, when confronted by a crucial situation, is capable of giving voice to his natural feelings as if he had never witnessed a work of dramatic or fictive art. Even a large proportion of cultivated people, unconsciously imitative, follow in expression the line of art. Conduct is often conditioned, even determined, more by the expression we give to our feelings than by the moral or religious influ-

ences which are presumed to give rise to these feelings.

The art of Ibsen and his followers has thrown open the doors to a new domain. This is the domain of social ethics. There is much that is sinister and dour in this new literature—with the attention perpetually fixed upon social evil and social tragedy. At times one revolts against the persistent depression of its tone—the horrors of heredity, the stigma of degeneracy, the decadence of morals, the conspiracy of social malfeasance. Despite this depressing influence, the moral basis of such works is a certain incorrigible optimism, a hopefulness which shines forth like a ray of light athwart the gloom. For morality, whether personal or social, has at the back of it an optimistic urge. A challenge to reformation is there. For morality is ever forward-looking, and presupposes conscious exertion toward remedial and reformatory measures.

Art is the fortunate synthesis of form and spirit, of style and moral purpose. The modern artist does homage, with George Eliot, not only to "the divine perfection of form," but also to "the secrets of a profound social sympathy." For he sees in his art work a means of improving the prevailing order of the world. Art becomes the means of evoking the social consciousness and awaking the social conscience. "It cannot be

denied," says Brunetière, "that *La Femme de Claude* or *An Enemy of the People* is a true drama, nor that there are few novels superior to *Anna Karénina*. They constitute the proof that neither the theater nor the novel is incapable of handling social questions. There is requisite for the task simply more talent and greater art. Whoever has the very high ambition of treating social questions in the theater or in the novel need only bring to it, with the entire control of the materials of his craft, a personal experience, a detailed experience, a carefully reasoned experience, of life. The number of literators thereby will be diminished, but the dignity of literature will be by just so much enhanced, and even still more the effectiveness of its influence."

We shall acquire no true comprehension of the dramatic art of our own time if we do not take into account these three persistent streams of tendency in contemporary thinking. The phenomenon of cosmopolitanism, first and foremost, confronts one upon every turn, and makes increasingly evident the broadened and heightened standards to which the contemporary artist must attain. "The man who expects to rise above mediocrity in this age," observes that spiritual critic, Francis Grierson, "must not only become familiar with the characteristics of his own people, but he must acquaint himself with the virtues

and vanities of other nations in order to wear off the provincial veneer which adheres to all individuals without practical experience, and mocks one in a too conscious security of contentment and indifference." The growth of cosmopolitanism, the centripetal force, has been balanced with cunning economy by means of a steadily increasing sense of nationality, the centrifugal force in modern culture. There is a marked similarity, often identity of form in the dramas of men and women of different nationalities. The variety and versatility they display finds its inspiration in the national spirit. Ibsen attained spiritual freedom in the atmosphere of Rome, Dresden, and Berlin; but the Norwegian spirit, the national impulse, beats like a heart at the center of his art work. Strindberg, a very Bohemian in his cosmopolitanism, continually exhibits the character, the outlook upon life, of the Swede. I have seen *The Doctor's Dilemma* delight the cosmopolitan audience of the Deutsches Theater in Berlin; but it was Celtic extravagance, Irish wit, which gave it verve and carrying power. *Anatol* titillates the sophisticated palates of New York and London; yet we realize that such sprightly raillery, such erotic melancholy, could emerge only from the fashionable purlieus of Vienna. *The Great Divide* sounds the note of universal passion and restraint; yet it vibrates with the barbaric energy and Puri-

tan conscientiousness of America. Constructed upon like models, technically similar, the dramas of to-day exhibit striking dissimilarities due not only to differences of personal temperament, but also to racial and national distinctions in spirit.

Along with this diffusion of the international spirit, this intensification of national characteristics, has proceeded the second current of influence. Beneath the pressure of social and humanitarian ideals, the literature of to-day has become surcharged with intention. The man of letters, turned publicist, has become animated by a spirit of service in behalf of society, of the present and of the future. This may be interpreted, in esthetics, as a reaction from the doctrine of "art for art's sake." Such a doctrine was essentially the doctrine of the painter, the creator of those works of art least susceptible of moral intention. Baudelaire maintained that "no poem will be so great, so noble, so truly worthy of the name of a poem, as that which has been written solely for the pleasure of writing a poem." Whistler airily displaced the noble muse in favor of a "tricksy jade"; and Oscar Wilde nonchalantly asserted: "All art is quite useless." Flaubert went so far as to inquire if a book, "*irrespective of what it says*," might not possess sovereign beauty. To George Sand, rather than to Ibsen, are we indebted for the modern revolt against the doctrine

of art for art's sake. "I am aware," she writes to Flaubert, "that you are opposed to the exposition of personal doctrine in literature. Are you right? Does not your opposition proceed rather from a want of conviction than from a principle of esthetics? If we have any philosophy in our brain it must needs break forth in our writings." . . .

Ibsen, with not wholly credible naïveté, expressed his surprise that he himself, "who had made it his life-task to depict human characters and destinies, should, without conscious or direct intention, have arrived in several matters at the same conclusions as the social-democratic philosophers had arrived at by scientific processes." Although Ibsen takes care to disclaim "conscious or direct intention," the whole series of his social dramas belies the statement. Preferring to be regarded as poet rather than as philosopher, Ibsen nevertheless shares with Tolstoy the doctrine that it is the duty of the artist to seek to improve the prevailing order of the world. The philosophy, the social philosophy, in the brain of the modern dramatists has assuredly "broken forth in their writings." And to-day we confront an epoch in art devoted to the task of holding up the mirror to society, exposing social abuse, and inspiring efforts towards the improvement of the existent social order.

Finally, then, we see how contemporary drama allies itself with the future. A drama of "social predication" is a drama which presupposes imperfections in the social structure. Such a drama serves as a direct excitant to social reform. The moral force of this manifest socialization of literature is unmistakable. Men everywhere now, in the dynamic art of drama, are bending their efforts to the perfecting of civil life, the enlargement of the freedom of the individual consonant with the higher social interests, the improvement of the prevailing social and moral order of the world, in the interest of society of to-day and of the future. Long before Marinetti sent his multicolored manifestoes fluttering down into the Piazza San Marco, a new social futurism had been born in the manger of modern art. The epitome of this new social futurism in art is found in the toast which Ibsen drank at a banquet in inauguration of the coming age:

"To that which is to be:
To that which shall come."

II

THE NEW CRITICISM AND THE NEW ETHICS

"Do you really attach much value to categories? I, for my part, believe that the dramatic categories are elastic, and that they must accommodate themselves to the literary facts—not *vice versa*."—HENRIK IBSEN.

"'The true'—is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is the expedient in the way of our behaving."—WILLIAM JAMES.

At a moment like this, when a new outburst of dramatic activity among English-speaking peoples is imminent if not actually present, it is a singular fact that criticism has not paved the way to popular understanding of the new drama. It is surely the function of the critic, if Croce be right, to identify himself with the artist in so complete and sensitive a way as actually to reproduce within himself those creative processes which go to the making of the work of art. Esthetic judgment strives ever to become more and more closely identified with creative art. Dramatic criticism, as a consequence, should be able to trace these new dramatic life forms as they emerge from the brain of the artist. We should then be en-

abled to learn the actual evolution of the contemporary drama throughout the course of its various changes—its evolution in form, technic, and content.

America is teeming with a vast horde of infinitely ambitious playgoers, no longer merely content with seeing and enjoying plays, but intent upon understanding them. There are many publics, each of which has a certain character, a certain distinguishing attribute; but there is one vast public which is untrained, untutored in esthetics, swinging, now this way, now that, in search of that which shall gratify their fancy and delight their senses, tickle them into laughter, stir them to sympathy, move them to tears. This untutored throng, in its sometimes unconscious aspiration for "culture," wants to be taught what the modern drama is, what benefits it may confer, what advantages it affords as a means of social enlightenment. Some new movement in literary art—fiction or drama, it matters not—was recently proposed in a great city of the Middle West, and there was a delightful naïveté, indicative of the aspiring proletarian attitude, in the assertion that "if the thing went through, we would *make culture hum*"! More remotely, perhaps, but no less positively, this untutored throng needs to know the significance of the drama, the reasons for its structure, its tone, its intellectual cast.

Our critics of the drama are unfortunately classic in predilection. Their academic spirit disdains to touch the drama of our own day as a distinct world movement, embracing the Scandinavian countries, Europe, England, and the United States. They prefer to remain on the safe ground of accomplished fact. The works already produced in the field of dramatic criticism have been, for the most part, marked by refined scholarship, wide learning, and indefatigable research into origins. Such work is necessary and valuable, in that it lays the foundation for a proper understanding of the historical basis of the drama. But it cannot be too earnestly urged that America still awaits the dramatic critic, liberal in spirit, catholic in taste, who will set forth deliberately, clearly, and without prejudice, the history of the contemporary drama from the period of Ibsen down to the present moment. Already many signs are present that the time is ripe, the conditions favorable, for the arrival of this criticism. Only through the medium of such interpretation will it be possible to effect a rational orientation in regard to the drama of to-day, and to achieve a proper outlook for the drama which promises in the future to flourish in our midst.

In the contemporary dramatic movement, nothing is more certain than the uncertainty of criticism in regard to the form, fundamental struc-

ture, and content,—intellectual, esthetic, emotional, social, moral,—of a contemporary work of dramatic art. The iconoclasm of modern dramatic practice, the revolt of the modern craftsman and his demand for freedom to enable him to open new paths for the passage of the creative consciousness, have proved vastly unsettling through the destruction of ancient superstitions, the shattering of outworn conventions, and the inauguration of new heresies. Gustav Freytag, presumably a modern authority upon the technic of the drama, wrote his *Technik des Dramas* scarcely four decades ago. It is significant to observe that when this book was written, Henrik Ibsen had not yet stirred modern consciousness with his formidable array of social dramas. The whole new realm of art disclosed by Ibsen and his successors was excluded from the field of Freytag's vision. It is this very realm which, by the richness of its intellectual content, the novelty and variety of its technic, the profusion of its newly created forms, awaits an interpreter and historian.

Until near the close of the nineteenth century English dramatic criticism achieved notoriety, rather than notability, for its failure to recognize and to realize the great masters in drama for our epoch—Ibsen and Wagner. This failure indubitably ensued because Ibsen and Wagner, icono-

clasts in their respective fields of art, broke violently with the traditions. The vital defect of English criticism was the inability to recognize that Ibsen and Wagner, for all their iconoclasm, succeeded in establishing standards of rigor in craftsmanship, seldom, if ever, equaled upon the ancient stage. There is always something of the iconoclast in the genius: the iconoclast and the reformer are phases of one and the same life. The genius still defies definition. That is an incomplete and partial definition which asserts that greatness consists simply in doing what other people have done but doing it better. To-day we should define this, not as genius, but as efficiency. Such a definition cripples the genius, clips his wings, bars all doors to creative imagination and constructive fancy. Since Taine, we have come to recognize that, in a certain specific sense, the work of art, no less than the human being, has its heredity, its origins, its transmitted qualities. But we also know that it is free to acquire new characteristics, to take new shapes, to compel the formulation of new laws. Genius is protean, creative, subject to a vital urge which fructifies in its advance, resulting in the throwing off of new and hitherto unsuspected varieties. Genius in the Bergsonian sense is the creative faculty of doing what no one else has ever done before, and thereby setting new standards to be formulated by poster-

ity. "The greatest artist," Bernard Shaw rightly maintains, "is he who goes a step beyond the demand, and by supplying works of a higher beauty and a higher interest than have yet been perceived succeeds, after a brief struggle with its strangeness, in adding this fresh extension of sense to the heritage of the race."

The drama is an evolutionary form. It is subject to modification under the pressure of genius, and through cross-fertilization from the impact of other forms. It develops, grows in accord with the evolving standards of society. True drama springs from the inner essential compulsion of the dramatic artist to creative self-expression, and not from any motive, however laudable and worthy, to conform to classical traditions or to current canons of taste. This is not to say that the artist can ignore the inherent limitations of the drama as an art form, or defy such rules as are unalterably fixed by the individuality of his medium. The true artist, however original or iconoclastic, can ignore only at his peril what Pater calls "the responsibility of the artist to his materials."

It cannot, however, be too vigorously affirmed that while the drama is essentially a democratic form of art, in the last analysis it is not the public, but the artist, who dictates the dramatic form. That revolution in dramatic art, which Mr. Walk-

ley lightly refers to as "the Ibsen episode," is clear in its demonstration that Ibsen dictated to the public for its adoption the form of the drama, subject to individual and racial modification, for an indefinite period. Ibsen's own plays have never swayed and carried with them the great public in English-speaking countries; but the plays of his followers in all civilized countries constitute the dramatic output of our time. This is a most significant circumstance, demonstrating that, regardless of popular approbation, the dramatist and not the public is the ultimate authority in the dictation of dramatic form. Oscar Wilde was quite right in fact, if not in tone, when he asserted that the public is not the munificent patron of the artist, but that the artist is the munificent patron of the public. That fresh extension of sense to the heritage of the race, of which Shaw speaks, is the contribution of neither critic nor public: it is the contribution of the creative artist himself.

Since the "laws" of the drama were formulated by Aristotle, they have evolved ceaselessly throughout the ages. The dramatists of to-day chafe under the manifest injustice of having their works measured by the Aristotelian yardstick, long since recognized as two thousand years out of date. No matter how remarkable Aristotle may have been in perception, intuition, and analy-

sis, his formulation of the results of the practice of dramatists until his time are to-day invalid if only on the score of incompleteness. They cannot serve as "laws" for the governance and restraint of contemporary genius. There is justice in the protest of a man like Granville Barker: "In the drama we are constantly referred to the sayings of a person called Aristotle. I have nothing to urge against them, and their quotation when one of Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripides appears would seem to me entirely appropriate, though even then I might prefer Euripides wrong to Aristotle right. But if the first words about the drama, however illuminating, are to be treated in any way whatsoever as if they must be the last, then I protest. The drama is alive, and about life there is nothing final to be said. I protest that in art nothing but its physical boundaries should be taken for granted. . . . Surely the sign of life in art has always been the revolt against tradition, the determination to remold the old forms which will no longer perfectly contain or express the new spirit."

The way-breaker in art, it must be granted, is at once disciple and master of his age. Disciple, because he must study and realize his age in order to be its interpreter and exponent. Master, because he imparts to his product something personal, incommunicable, inalienable—and thereby

dominates the thought and stimulates the emotions of his contemporaries. The technic of Ibsen has become the common mold into which the most noteworthy dramas of to-day are cast; but the genius, the spirit, of Ibsen no one has been able to imitate with success. The evolutional trend of all art, imaginative and realistic, imperatively obliges the dramatist to make himself conversant with—which is not at all the same thing as slavishly subservient to—the prevailing conditions of his art as practised by his fellow-craftsmen. If he is to reap to the full the benefit of both past progress and present innovation, the dramatist must squarely take account of all that has been done before him. The works of his forerunners may furnish the new dramatist inspiration for fresh endeavors. These works may, on the other hand, hold up fingers of warning against the errors into which the authors fell. "To Alexander Dumas I owe nothing, as regards dramatic form," said Ibsen in answer to the inquiry of Brandes—manifestly an unconscious prevarication prompted by pique—but he significantly adds, "except that I have learned from his plays to avoid several very awkward faults and blunders, of which he is not infrequently guilty." "The drama," says Pinero, "is not stationary, but progressive. By this I do not mean that it is always improving; what I do mean is that its conditions are always

changing, and that every dramatist whose ambition it is to produce live plays is absolutely bound to study carefully the conditions that hold good for his own day and generation."

In the present time, when such practical scientists as De Vries and Burbank have shown that evolution proceeds, not invariably by infinitely slow processes extending through aeons of time, but occasionally by sudden and startling mutations, one need not be surprised to find valid parallels in the domain of art and letters. Indeed, a resurvey of the history of the drama in the light of modern scientific theory indicates that its types, in the course of their evolution, have exhibited sudden and revolutionary changes, in particular during periods when the drama flourished as the most potent of the literary art forms. The history of the drama is made up at once of the biographies of great men and of the biographies of great movements—individual, personal factors and their inevitable consequence, direct and spontaneous outbursts of creative energy. If it be true that the drama is the meeting place of art and life, then there need be no surprise in the discovery that the drama is responsive to the conditions and attributes of the civilization which gives it birth. Aristophanes knew as little of the captain of industry or the conservation of natural resources as Shakespeare knew of wireless

telegraphy, Molière of Darwinism, or Hugo of Pragmatism. It would have been as impossible for Corneille to write a *Ghosts* or Calderon a *Waste*, as it would be to-day for Bernard Shaw to say what society will be like under Socialism. Shakespeare's conception of tragedy differs as much from Aristotle's as Ibsen's differs from Dryden's. Centuries separate the intimate theater of Strindberg, the one-act dramolet of Schnitzler, from the Greek drama, in that Olympian home of the plastic arts, and from the sprawling Chronicle play of the pre-Elizabethan period.

This law of change finds instructive, often amusing, exemplification in the circumstance that plays, like people, have a way of aging. In a revival, *Our Boys* may give all the appearance of a wonderfully preserved, but absurdly conservative, old man. When *Dundreary* comes once more to the fore after a lapse of forty years, we are reminded of nothing so much as of a decayed gentleman. The artist of one age is the artisan in the eyes of the next. The rigid conventions of one period of art culture become the threadbare conventionalities of a more advanced epoch. The lyric romanticism of yesterday seems but the most artificial affectation to-day. Customs, manners, and even morals all become obsolete in the course of time. Human nature, in a word char-

acter, alone remains the same. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* is an aphorism that breaks down for the drama in its structural and physical aspects. The face of society and the conventions of technic perpetually change in a like ratio; and once changed, progress seldom permits reversion to type. From time to time there may be a species of atavism, the "throw back" of *Ghosts* to the type of *Œdipus*, for example, of Maeterlinck to Shakespeare and the pre-Shakespearean tragedy of blood. But in general progress is evolutional; and plays, after a certain length of time, varying with conditions and circumstances, begin to "date" in a hopeless and deplorable fashion. "Everything has its own rate of change," says Bernard Shaw. "Fashions change more quickly than manners, manners more quickly than morals, morals more quickly than passions, and, in general, the conscious reasonable life more quickly than the instinctive, wilful, affectionate one. The dramatist who deals with the irony and humor of the relatively durable sides of life, or with their pity and terror, is the one whose comedies and tragedies will last longest—sometimes so long as to lead a book-struck generation to dub him 'Immortal'; and proclaim him as 'not for an age, but for all time.'"

In precisely the same way, the fundamental tone of the drama, its outlook on life, in the

course of time undergoes alteration through the influence of the evolutionary trend of human ideals. "It has been said of me on different occasions that I am a pessimist," said Ibsen in a speech at a banquet in Stockholm in 1887. "And so I am in so far as I do not believe in the everlastingness of human ideals. But I am also an optimist in so far as I firmly believe in the capacity for procreation and development of ideals." As ideals in one stage of civilization tend to disintegrate, they are replaced by ideals which are more progressive, more in conformity with the spirit of the coming age.

Beautiful in sentiment, false in thesis, are the lines:

"All passes. Art alone
Enduring stays to us;
The Bust outlasts the throne,—
The Coin, Tiberius;

Even the gods must go;
Only the lofty Rime
Not countless years o'erthrow,—
Nor long array of Time."

We are coming to see nowadays that art, in its monuments, does not enduring stay to us; that the principles which art embodies, the morals it enshrines, under changed conditions, tend slowly toward loss of appeal, toward loss of validity, so that the worth of the art work as a symbol of the enduring is ultimately vitiated. Nietzsche insisted upon a "transvaluation of all values." By

transvaluation he meant re-valuation—with a difference. In such a process we are transported out of the old region of conventional valuation, across the boundary line, into a new realm of juster judgment and more clear-sighted appraisal. Transvaluation in ideals, in morals, necessarily enforces a partial transvaluation in esthetic values —in that all art has a two-fold appeal, moral as well as esthetic. "It is not without deep pain," confesses Nietzsche, consummate artist as well as philosopher and moralist, "that we acknowledge the fact that in their loftiest soarings artists of all ages have exalted and divinely transfigured precisely those ideas which we now recognize as false; they are the glorifiers of humanity's religions and philosophical errors; and they could not have been this without belief in the absolute truth of these errors." As we advance in civilization, we lose our reverence for those ideals, moral qualities, individual virtues, social predispositions which were once regarded as universally valid and obligatory. There is a corresponding, though not a fixed or measurable, waning of interest in works of art embodying these outworn values. The ancient values are replaced by new and more enlightened values, according more precisely with the spirit of the age. Dramatists like Ibsen, Galsworthy, Brieux, and Shaw ruthlessly expose the tragic consequences of adherence to "duties"

which are no longer obligatory; enjoin upon us the necessity of revolt against the tyranny of outworn customs; inspire us to shatter the ancient social petrifactions which destroy the vitality and initiative of human impulse. The callous cynicism and brutal tyranny which make possible a Patient Griselda only shock a generation busied in granting to woman the rights of common humanity, of political and economic freedom—the right, in a word, to normal development as individual.

As social and ethical ideas and ideals evolve through the course of the centuries, the so-called classics of the past steadily weaken their hold upon the consciousness of humanity. But it must be pointed out that this loss is counterbalanced by the persistence of the esthetic principles which the art work embodies. We must not confuse the categories of ethics and esthetics. Historical criticism demands that the work of art shall be judged in the light of the ideals which produced it. "Art," says Alfred Stevens, "is nature seen through the prism of an emotion"; and a true work of art, the vitally moving vision of nature, is dateless and eternal. It survives as a living monument of the buried life of the past. It assuredly tends to lose its esthetic procreative function—its power of giving rise to other works of art. We may admire and jealously preserve art

works which we would never dream of imitating. Art as art is wholly independent of either utility or morality, possessing a value that is intrinsic. But when we create a work of art, we are animated by a conscious or an unconscious moral motive. "*We select* from the crowd of intuitions which are formed or at least sketched within us," says Croce; "and the selection is governed by selection of the economic conditions of life and of its moral direction. Therefore, when we have formed an intuition, it remains to decide whether or no we should communicate it to others, and to whom, and when, and how; all of which considerations fall equally under the utilitarian and ethical conception."

Procreative art works contain within themselves the germ of esthetic development, of utilitarian and ethical application. Imitation of the classics ceases when the classics reveal themselves as outworn repositories of ideas, feelings, views of life which have lost their validity, verity and force for the modern world. The thinking of to-day has grown sanely pragmatic. Truth itself now has an utilitarian attribute: it must "make good." Beauty is judged in the same way. The contemporary artist has abandoned the esthetic treatment of false ideas, however hallowed, enshrined in classic literature. For this day, such ideas are false because they won't "work."

The questions, of form, of technic, of content, raised by the persistent practice of dramatists during the past half century, demand conscientious treatment and adequate solution at the hands of contemporary dramatic criticism. New ideas have forced their way to the front; new forms of art have met acceptance at the hands of the public; new dramatic conventions have replaced the outworn and theatrical conventionalities of an earlier epoch. The pressure of realism and the impulsive thrust of the new social order have basically affected the structure, tenor, and content of the drama. The psychology of the crowd helps us to a more rational comprehension of the secrets of popular appeal. The architectural features of the modern playhouse are not without their subtle but unmistakable influence in conditioning the form of the modern drama. More irrevocable than ever before is the divorce of play from public, actors from audience. Gone is the court-yard stage of Shakespeare, gone the tennis-court stage of the Grand Monarque, gone the semi-circular platform of but a century ago. To-day the illusion of objectivity is immense, the pictorial appeal inescapable. We gaze through a picture-frame encircling the farce or the melodrama, the comedy or the tragedy, of this, our time.

III

SCIENCE AND THE NEW DRAMA

"In order to survive, a literary form must be assimilated by society, must demonstrate its utility by expressing better that society's view of what is real and true in life."—JOHN PRESTON HOSKINS.

ANY profound study of the evolution of the drama in relation to its formal development inevitably leads to a readjustment of view in regard to those marvelous, hypothetical formulas which the night-by-night chronicler of the passing show glibly and unquestioningly terms the "laws of the drama." Less than a century ago, prior to Darwin's formulation of the theory of evolution, and long antecedent to De Vries' exposition of the phenomena of mutation, and William James' enunciation of the doctrine of Pragmatism, such hampering restrictions as the postulates of the three unities stood virtually unchallenged as obligatory laws of the drama. Only three decades ago, Brunetière dogmatically enunciated the "unique law of the drama." And to-day, the dead hand of formalism in drama still weighs heavily, a retarding force upon a noble art. Authority,

masked in the garb of Aristotle, of Lessing, of Freytag, of Brunetière, is invoked to crush the new movement toward freedom—the freedom for the exercise of the creative function in the production of new forms.

The drama is a life form, as well as an art form. As such, it is a function of the human spirit. Science, then, includes it within its survey; and properly regards it as a species subject to variation and mutation. A vast domain opens before the new art criticism, which shall draw its analogies from the field of biological science—these analogies modified in accordance with the peculiar restrictions of the work of art as a life form. History affords innumerable illustrations of the variations of literary species in accordance with certain principles cognate, if not identical, with the laws governing biological phenomena. A given variety of dramatic form,—the fate tragedy of the Greeks, the blood-and-thunder drama of the pre-Elizabethans, the well-made play of Scribe,—undergoes a process of active evolution. This variety, by reason of its social utility, through insensible gradations, a continuous improvement and stratification, fixes itself as an accepted type of drama. When this variety has reached the stage of universal acceptance, the dramatist, the original human factor, introduces some new unit character into the group of units which constitute

this particular type of variety. This originality of individual genius is as yet a complex and not altogether comprehensible phenomenon. Immediately, a sharp mutation takes place: a new variety, individually distinct from the old, comes into being.

The Greek dramatist created the species of fate-tragedy with the unit idea of human panic and dread in face of the unplumbed mysteries of man's origin, purpose, and destiny. Marlowe and Shakespeare, reflecting the deeper instincts of Protestant theology, incorporated into the drama the unit idea of individual responsibility. The conception was so revolutionary, the transference of the controlling will of the world from God to man so anarchic, that a new species originated. This was the drama of individual fatality, in which fate becomes synonymous with individual character and conscience. From the doctrine of evolution, Ibsen imports into the drama a new unit idea: the idea that the individual is the creature of the historical moment, of social environment, of physical heredity. A transformation takes place, giving rise to the new species: the drama of naturalism. From the philosophy of mysticism, the contemplative sphere of Novalis, Ruysbroeck, and Emerson, Maeterlinck selects a unit idea: the idea that passive virtue has a higher ideal value than constructive deeds. This unit

idea, projected into drama, leads in criticism to the theory of the static drama; in dramaturgy to the emergence of a new variety: the drama of immobility. From the field of politics, Shaw imports into the drama the idea that words, the expression of inspired conviction, are not only as valuable as actions, but *are themselves actions* in the sense of being creative and constructive agencies for the influence and alteration of other people's opinions. A new species is thus originated: the drama of discussion, in which volitional activity is expressed by means of the free expression of opinion.

These new species, as they come into existence, are brought into competition with already existing species. This competition is fundamentally different from the biological phenomenon of the "struggle for existence," though it bears a superficial similarity to it. The true life form, in the biological realm, throughout the course of the earlier ages, did actually struggle, instinctively or volitionally, to maintain its existence in competition with other rival, life forms. But Hoskins has astutely pointed out that different literary species can compete only for assimilation by the public. So long as a given species conforms generally to society's conception of ideal truth and psychological reality, so long will that species continue to exist in demonstration of its social utility. Furthermore, a species, by reason of its

perfection of form, may continue to survive, long after its social utility has been impaired and its ideas recognized as imperfect, outworn, or even trivial. The *Iliad*, as epic, survives as a literary monument, not as a creative art form; the well-made piece survives by reason of the dexterity of its dramaturgics, in face of its singular poverty of ideas. No real struggle for existence, for the supplanting and destruction of another species, can be said to take place in literature. For since the power of assimilation by the public is unlimited, the "competition" of one literary species consists in its adaptation to intellectual and social environment, and in no sense involves as a consequence the elimination of another literary species. The people in the theater who sit as guilty participants in the social evils depicted by Hauptmann still rejoice in the enlargement and invigoration of the human ego afforded by the individualistic drama of Shakespeare and Schiller. The same individual is capable of experiencing, with pleasurable emotion, at once the acceleration of pulse evoked by the romantic comedy of Rostand, the mental cerebration set up by the dialectic comedy of Shaw, the sociologic indignation aroused by the tragi-comedy of Ibsen.

In a genuine, and profound sense, a literary species may illustrate phenomena of survival, cognate to the biological phenomena of survival.

A literary species possesses fecundity in two senses. First, as already shown, through its aptitude for passive assimilation by society. Second, through its power of creativeness. In the latter sense, a literary species survives when it possesses within itself the germs of reproductive imitation. That is to say, it possesses the qualities of permanent virility which result in inspiring the creation of similar works after its own model. An Ibsen creates a new species of drama; and this species as a model inspires countless followers of Ibsen to imitation and reproduction, with minor variations.

Both novelty of form and novelty of content are instrumentalities in prolonging the life of a species. A question which naturally arises in this connection is this: which attribute, form or content, is the more virile, the better calculated to assure the survival of a given species? A work of art, long after its powers of reproductive stimulation are entirely exhausted, survives for the sake of its form, as a noteworthy literary achievement. It is interesting in the history of literature as the fossil remains of the dinosaur are interesting in the history of science—as marking a transition in the evolution of species. Content, on the other hand, is a vital, living force —more accessible and more easily understood by the public than artistic form, which in its last

analysis is mechanistic. The variation exhibited in any new literary species is effected by ideas imported from other realms of thought, and not from ideas already existent in the sphere of literature. Since content, expression of ideas, appeals to society as a living, active issue, while style, form, is merely a passive virtue, it is logical to infer that content wields a wider and deeper influence upon the life of literature than form. Perfection of form serves as a preservative against the corrosive test of time. But content, an expression of the universal life of the race, may exert vast influence even when the form is imperfect. And furthermore, it seldom fails to contain the vital stimulant to imitative reproduction so rarely lodged in form.

In any consideration of the formal development of the drama, the new dramatic critic, with the enlarged view afforded by the most recent scientific discoveries, in particular the theories of Darwin and De Vries, views with suspicion the attempt to formulate absolute laws governing literary species. Indeed, the drama, viewed in the light of the doctrine of evolution, cannot be subject to a group of absolute rules or laws posited in advance. For since the drama, through the influence of the historical moment, the pressure of social thought, the advance of civilization, undergoes a continuous process of evolution, the " laws "

of to-day may at any moment emerge into light as the false generalizations of criticism based upon insufficient data. The perpetual intervention of that transforming force, the individual dramatist, in the realm of existent drama, gives rise to sudden mutations and variations utterly unforeseen and, indeed, not to be foreseen by the most astute criticism. The critic is estopped from formulating hard and fast rules, the so-called "laws" of the drama. It were idle to formulate theories, and afterward endeavor to force facts to conform to those theories. The modern philosopher, of the type of James and Bergson, concerns himself primarily with facts, phenomena; and his concern is to devise theories, which shall satisfactorily and completely explain these facts and phenomena.

The modern scientist, in particular the pure scientist, employs a machinery of reasoning which organizes itself steadily toward greater and greater accuracy in the determination of truth. The mathematician, the geometer, the physicist, can no longer satisfy himself with the bald enunciation of the general laws conditioning certain phenomena. For these conditions, unless minutely analyzed, may be deficient in two respects: they may not wholly suffice to explain the phenomena, or else they may over-explain it, and so involve redundancies. The principle of scientific efficiency demands that the scientist, in explaining

phenomena, shall formulate his conditions in such a way as to fulfil three tests: they must be necessary; they must be sufficient; and they must contain no redundancies. They must be neither more nor less than, but exactly, enough to explain and produce the given phenomena. In the sphere of art, criticism must recognize the necessity for employing a like, an equal, scientific accuracy in formulating the "laws" conditioning literary phenomena. And furthermore, whether he be a Pragmatist or not, only at his peril will he evade the consequences of that doctrine. Only those principles of drama which survive the test of time can be termed the true principles of the drama. It is the business of the critic, if he can, to discover the course of the evolution of the drama. That, and not any abstract, absolute law, posited in advance, shall be the test of the drama. The true drama, then, is the drama which prevails; and it is the critic's business to discover whether a drama of given form and content will in the long run prevail.

Survival as the test of right, of truth, involves the obligation to include within one's survey the entire scope of history, and to make one's generalizations from the largest attainable group of facts. The most that the critic can do, at any given moment, is to draw up a series of generalizations based upon a series of scientifically accurate

observations. From all the considerable and noteworthy examples of drama which history presents he must disengage those principles and attributes which are common to all. Furthermore he must align other generalizations with the trend of the drama contemporary with himself. "Laws of the drama," so-called, are empirical generalizations, critical integrations of the practice of all dramatists worthy of consideration up to the present time.

The most noteworthy illustration of this statement is the classic illustration of the three unities. In the light of modern criticism, based on scientifically accurate observation of the drama and of dramatic criticism of all time, it is obvious that Aristotle wrote primarily for his own epoch, and not for ours. Indeed, one may well question whether he was final in his *Poetics*, even for his own epoch. Certain it is that this "master of those who know" was no mere theory-spinner, advancing intricate hypotheses concerning the drama to exhibit his own intellectual virtuosity. Aristotle was an accurate thinker, basing his formulations of the principles of the drama upon a series of close deductions from a study of the plays of the Greeks. The enormous field for comparison presented to the dramatic critic of to-day in the dramatic literatures of all great art-producing races throughout all recorded history was

not open to him. His criticism inevitably exhibits the limitations imposed upon him by the fact that he was restricted solely to an intensive study of the drama of the Greeks. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that he spoke with authority for his own epoch. And there be those who still tediously maintain that he spoke with final authority for ours. A profound student of the drama of actual representation, that is, the play in a theater performed by actors before an audience, he arrived at many conclusions which were valid, not only for the drama of his own day, but for the drama of all time.

On the other hand, as a simple illustration will show, he made *ex cathedra* generalizations which were scarcely valid even for the drama of the Greeks. "As for the story," he says, "whether the poet takes it ready made or constructs it for himself, he should first sketch its general outline, and then fill in the episodes and amplify in detail." The confessions of numerous modern dramatists, from Ibsen down, demonstrate that there are a variety of ways, which may be innumerable, in which one may construct a play. In an analysis of the preliminary drafts for Ibsen's plays, which is found in my *European Dramatists*, it is shown that Ibsen pursued methods which varied according to varying circumstances: the nature of the play, the philosophic idea he had

matured, the incidents from life which furnished the starting point or germ of a drama, the peculiar temperament of some particular individual or group of individuals of his acquaintance, certain scientific discoveries, the atmosphere which he wished to create. We have record of the confessions of various practical craftsmen, showing both variety and contrariety in the task of writing a drama. The injunction of Aristotle, narrow and false as it is, sounds rather more like warning than advice—a warning against the Greek tendency toward a certain plastic immobility. Aristotle may perhaps have realized that he was writing for all time; he was assuredly shrewd enough to realize that it was his immediate business to write with reference to the stage of his own day. Writing before an age like our own, grown skeptical of the practical utility of dramatic criticism, he took himself seriously, and wrote for the profit and service of the dramatists who were his contemporaries.

The three unities—the unities of time, of place, and of action—are still inaccurately referred to as the "unities of Aristotle." Modern criticism has demonstrated that, in his *Poetics*, Aristotle insists upon only one unity—unity of action. He actually does not lay down the preservation of the unities of time and place as fundamental "laws" of the drama. Unity of place is not

adverted to in the *Poetics;* and his disquisitions upon unity of time, as analysis shows, quite naturally prove to be merely his critical deductions, drawn from patient interrogation of the habitual practice of the ablest dramatists up to his time. Since his time, the critical controversies over the question of the preservation of the unities, which have transpired in all countries where the drama has flourished as an art, furnishes the subject for one of those elaborate, yet so far as the contemporary dramatist is concerned, largely profitless disquisitions over questions which have passed from the field of practical utility. Not without its piquant humor is the memory that, in the days of Corneille, the *odium dramaticum* burned almost as fiercely as the *odium theologicum.* No dramatist was awarded the critical seal of approval unless he conformed to the three sacrosanct unities. Boileau, the spokesman of critical authority, reformulated what he conceived to be the Aristotelian principles in the terse and succinct declaration that a tragedy must show "one action in one day and in one place." So convinced were the critics of the period, and of the two or three succeeding centuries, of the validity and universal pertinency of the "Aristotelian principles," that they believed that, had the *Poetics* been destroyed in ancient times, it would have been necessary to reinvent, or rather, recodify, the same principles.

Unity of time, so-called, was recognized by Aristotle as a characteristic of the dramas of the Greeks, and not at all as a distinctive attribute of the dramatic species. His words are eloquent on this point: "Tragedy endeavors, so far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit." Authority, in the person of the Italian critics of the Renascence, Cynthio, Robortelli, and Trissino, as Spingarn has pointed out, stratified Aristotle's empirical generalization upon the Greek dramas into an obligatory law for the drama as a literary species. Indeed, they went even further and limited the time for the dramatic action to "one artificial day." The generalization as to the unity of place is but an analogy after the model of unity of time; and was erected into a "law" by one of the most subtle and profound of dramatic critics, Castelvetro. Two conceptions of the drama and its influence underlay Castelvetro's theories in regard to the unities. In the first place, he conceived of the theater as a public institution, the drama as democratic by nature. In the second place, he anticipated the realistic temper of the audience of to-day in his conviction that people in a theater desire to see convention reduced to a minimum and reality raised to a maximum. He insisted that the dramatist, as a purveyor of artistic pleasure, must defer to the public and its

desires. This deference must be shown in observation of the principle now termed the principle of economy of attention. Hence Castelvetro formulated the principle of the unity of place as well as that of time, under the sincere conviction that only by avoiding a change of place—with its fancied distraction and dissipation of attention—might the interest of the audience be fixed, concentrated and maintained.

These theories of the unities, erected into "principles" by the guardians of the academic school, obtained in the drama of Europe, with singular and amazing effectiveness, down to the first decade of the nineteenth century. The plausible theories of the subtle Italian critics were dexterously put into practice by the French dramatists; the assured artistic eminence of France in the drama exercised authoritative influence upon other European literatures. Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, Lope de Vega and his fellow-craftsmen in Spain, deliberately disregarded the unities, in especial those of time and place, discovering as practical playwrights that no loss in popular support of their dramas was entailed through their refusal to be subjected to the hampering restrictions of these unities. The Gallic spirit, bred in the school of formalism and erecting the principle of artistic correctness into a formula, rejoiced in working in a carefully restricted medium and in

conquering the difficulties imposed by dramatic criticism. When with a burst of lyric fervor Romanticism culminated in France with Victor Hugo, the anarchic spirit of the new libertarianism burst the bonds of the old formalism. In the famous preface to his *Cromwell*, Hugo formulated the code of the new freedom in dramatic art, and boldly disavowed the unities of time and place.

The contemporary dramatists, from Ibsen until to-day, no longer accept the unities of time and place as obligatory laws. Nevertheless, in certain important respects, the practice of the contemporary playwright demonstrates the occasional efficacy, if not the necessity, of preserving the unity of time and even the unity of place. The fancy of the spectator, it is true, enables him to effect the transition from place to place without shattering the illusion of actuality, provided the unity of action is fully maintained. Yet a certain intensiveness of treatment, with a consequent maintenance of concentration of attention, is unquestionably advantageous. This, in fact, is an actual and indispensable quality of the drama of recessive action. The play representing the culmination of a long series of events which have transpired prior to its beginning, gains in focal interest and directness of appeal when the action is confined to a given place or locality. Moreover, the same considerations bespeak the ad-

vantages of the preservation of the unity of time. Not perhaps in the actual sense; for it is seldom if ever the case that the drama, in actual representation, takes exactly the time consumed by the happening of these same events in real life. But the contemporary dramatist often employs the principle of "idealized time" with excellent effect. In the speech of the chorus to the public, in the Prologue to *King Henry V*, Shakespeare voices the artistic principle of the true dramatist in regard to idealized time when he speaks of

> ". . . jumping o'er times,
> Turning the accomplishment of many years
> Into an hour-glass . . ."

The spectator readily conspires to ignore brief intervals of time, in which no incident inherently relevant to the progress of the action has taken place. Indeed, there is a certain rational basis for the principles of the unities of both time and place. For they may both be regarded as subsidiary features of the unity of action. Unity of action may, at times, be best secured by preserving the unities of both time and place; since needless lapses of time may weaken the attention of the spectators, and auxiliary incidents in a sub-plot, requiring a change of place, may distract the interest of the audience from the central theme of the drama. Furthermore, as Grillparzer has astutely pointed out, the question of time is inti-

mately associated with action, dealing with the feelings and the passions which weaken in intensity, force, and appeal with the passage of undue lapses of time.

While unity of place for the entire drama is no longer regarded as obligatory by the contemporary dramatist, it is a generally accepted principle that there must be no changes of scene within a single act. For, in the rigorous technic of modern dramaturgy, each act is conceived as a unit, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. The totality of effect, the unity of impression, is best achieved from the act which is itself a unit, not a concatenation of broken parts. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that, occasionally, noteworthy dramatic effects are achieved through changes of scene within an act. The pressure of modern realistic methods and the length of time consumed in an elaborate resetting of the scene make it highly impracticable to effect changes of scene within a single act. On the Continental stage, this latter difficulty is avoided through the employment of the mechanism of the revolving platform, enabling several scenes to be set simultaneously and obviating the necessity for dreary waits between scenes. But there is reason to question the value of the supposed advantage gained by the use of this mechanism, for the theoretical considerations already submitted. The practice

was long ago condemned by Corneille; and Lessing protested against this strain upon the credulity of the audience, caused by rapid scenic changes which could only smack of the miraculous.

The one unity considered indispensable—and, indeed, in a sense rightly understood, truly indispensable—is known as the "unity of action." The inadequacy of the term is peculiarly apparent to-day, in view of the uncertainty of criticism in regard to the meaning, purport, and content of action. Aristotle rightly points out that the true drama must be an organic whole, to which all the constituent parts are vital. In so many words, he makes the apparently gratuitous observation that a dramatic action must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. But the entire structure of the three unities tumbles to the ground when we realize that unity of action is, no more than the unities of time and place, a differentiating characteristic of the drama. Every work of art, no matter of what kind, endowed with that type of structural unity which best holds the concentrated attention of the spectator, possesses antiseptic and preservative quality. It is not only art which is concerned for the preservation of unity: it is unity which is concerned for the preservation of art. In every literary type, from the homeopathic short story to the allopathic novel, from the dramolet to the epic, there is ever to be gained

artistic advantage through the elimination of the non-essential.

A machine is judged for its efficiency on the basis of "mechanical advantage," which is nothing more than the ratio of the useful to the useless work it may be made to accomplish. This scientific terminology is certainly applicable to art; and by analogy the "esthetic advantage" of a work of art may be defined as the ratio of those instrumentalities which create to those which fail to create the desired effects. Unity of action, so-called, is indispensable only in this precise sense: the esthetic advantage of the work of art shall be of such a nature that the instrumentalities which create shall vastly preponderate over those which fail to create the desired effects.

It is clear, to-day, that a drama need not have a single action, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Nor can it possess unity of action when it cannot be said to contain action in the sense succinctly expressed and narrowly understood by Aristotle. There is one word which best expresses the temper of modern art: *Stimmung*. There is no just English equivalent for this term. *Mood* possesses the unfortunate connotation of transitoriness and evanescence; *temperament* is usually thought of as a personal attribute. The creative craftsman of to-day may be said to have added

to the three unities of time, place, and action a fourth unity: unity of impression. This type of unity is most effectively achieved in dramas which, on the side of physical activity, are static rather than dynamic. Variety and diversity of " action " usually tend to shatter unity of impression. The more " action," the less unity of impression.

In a word, unity of impression is a unity of inaction rather than a unity of action. The skill of Maeterlinck in achieving unity of impression in his static dramas is a case in point. Yet it must be acknowledged that Strindberg in his *Dance of Death,* Von Hofmannsthal in his *Elektra,* Wilde in his *Salomé,* D'Annunzio in his *Francesca da Rimini* have achieved a certain definite unity of impression. And yet these are plays by no means deficient in " action," in the sense commonly understood.

The modern play which achieves true unity of impression is suggestively described by the musician as a tonal poem. One tone sounds throughout the piece. Such a play would doubtless be described by the painter as a symphony—a symphony in green, or blue, or gray, let us say. A chosen color scheme, with nuances of a single primary color, may interpret the dominant mood of the piece. The relation between sounds and sensibilities, between colors and emotions, is a very intimate, though very subtle, relation. The mod-

ern realization of these intimate inter-relations may be said to account for the appearance of the stage manager. The very professional terms in current use convey this growing sense of the inter-relationship of the arts. The drama for the intimate theater is constructed after the analogy of chamber music. The drama, enacted within the field of the picture-frame of the proscenium arch, relies for many of its finer effects upon its qualities of pictorial appeal. Many a modern play, to employ the phrase used by Wilde to describe his novel, may be termed "an essay in decorative art."

To-day, the creation of atmosphere has become the business of the dramatist no less than the problem of illuminative, co-operative setting has become the business of the artist-technician. Ibsen, Strindberg, D'Annunzio, and Maeterlinck tread hard upon the heels of Craig, Reinhardt, Stanislavsky, and Foster Platt. The author of *Hamlet*, of *Macbeth*, was the first and greatest of the modern dramatists in the art of achieving unity of impression and continuity of effect. The most tragic artistic incident of modern times is the chronological mischance that the author of *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the supreme master of atmospheric illusion, came too soon to write for the intimate art theater of to-day, and of to-morrow. The treatment of an incident, de-

spite the drastic pronouncements of the naturalists, can never be a matter of mere record. The most extravagant theorist of the naturalists, Zola himself, realized the personal, subjective element of all art in the definition that a work of art is a corner of life seen through the prism of a temperament. The transforming quality of art, falsely termed idealization, is the creation of a specific effect, attained by the artist himself and esthetically communicated to others through the prism of the artist's temperament. Facts, then, only afford the raw materials: they do not impose a specific mode of treatment. It is the mood of the artist which determines the treatment of his materials.

A glance at conspicuous works of the most notable contemporary dramatists will convey, better than any theorizing, a true impression of modern practice in regard to the unities of time, place, and action, and the unity of impression, or *Stimmung*, which is the particular contribution of modern dramaturgy. Ibsen, to whom one naturally first turns for revolutionary advances in technic, far from breaking away from the unities simply because they were limitations upon freedom, conformed to them whenever his materials and their handling gained artistically through such conformity. The true dramatist, as the French have demonstrated, best exhibits his mas-

tery by working within limits. The social dramas of Ibsen are, as we shall see later, culminations of a complex crisis; and this intensiveness of treatment is best secured by conforming to the unities of time and place, as well as of action.

The supreme achievement of Ibsen, the creation of unity of tone or mood, was best attained by utilizing the other three unities in a perfectly liberal way. Unity of place is preserved whenever, by so doing, the unity of impression is best secured; it is violated with equal readiness whenever the materials and the chosen treatment require its violation. In *The League of Youth*, there are no changes within an act and the action takes place entirely within the limits of a single village. In *The Pillars of Society*, *A Doll's House*, and *Ghosts* a single room suffices; in *An Enemy of the People*, three rooms in the same city; in *The Wild Duck*, two rooms; in *Rosmersholm*, two rooms in the same house; in *The Lady from the Sea*, different spots in the same locality; in *Hedda Gabler*, a single room; in *The Master Builder*, two rooms and the veranda of the same house; in *Little Eyolf*, the house and garden of the same country place; and in *John Gabriel Borkman*, two stories of the same dwelling and the front yard. *When We Dead Awaken*, being a play of pure symbolism, though involving the change of scene from the coast to the mountains, really has

no geography in the strict sense. With only this exception, which from its nature cannot be regarded as a real exception, unity of place is preserved in all of Ibsen's social dramas. There is a change of immediate place, whenever occasion demands; never a change of locality.

The same compression of treatment, artistic foreshortening, which demands unity of place demands even more imperatively unity of time. Dramas which are convergent and culminant in treatment embody incidents which move rapidly to a crisis. The action of *The Comedy of Love*, which may be regarded as the first of Ibsen's social dramas, requires less than twenty-four hours; and of the earlier heroic dramas, *Lady Inger of Oestraat* requires only five. Only a day may intervene between the acts of the comedy of intrigue, *The League of Youth; The Pillars of Society*, *A Doll's House* and *The Lady from the Sea* require about sixty hours each; *Rosmersholm*, fifty-two; *The Wild Duck*, forty; *Hedda Gabler* and *Little Eyolf*, thirty-six. For *The Master Builder* fewer than twenty-four hours suffice; for *Ghosts* only sixteen; for *John Gabriel Borkman* a bare three. The last-mentioned play exhibits the greatest compression in time. The time required for producing the play, on account of the changes of scene between the acts (unless the revolving stage is employed), is actually greater than the time con-

sumed by the events represented, which are of unbroken sequence. Even *An Enemy of the People,* in which the dramatic action conditions delay, may be imagined to transpire within the space of less than two days. It must not, however, be inferred, from the above examples, that Ibsen was hampered by the restrictions of the unities of time and place. In historic and fantastic dramas, frequent changes of place and long lapses of time are entirely legitimate; and Ibsen freely uses ten changes of scene in *The Pretenders;* there are seven or eight scenes in *Brand;* in *Peer Gynt* approximately forty! *The Pretenders, Brand,* and *Emperor and Galilean* cover long periods of time, counted in years; and *Peer Gynt* covers the quindecennium of a lifetime.

The greatest freedom and variety, in the matter of time and place, is exhibited in the works of contemporary dramatists. The most conspicuous break with traditions is Bennett's *Milestones,* which deals successively with three successive generations. No one consistently shows so close an observance of these unities as Ibsen; indeed, no dramatist since Ibsen has exhibited so complete a mastery or so persistent an employment of the analytic method. Yet it is to be observed that in many of the most significant works of leading dramatists, especially in social dramas showing a culmination or closely knit com-

pound of motives, the unities of both time and place are observed with scrupulous care. Obviously the reason for this is inherent in the subject and its just mode of treatment, not in any servile adherence on the dramatist's part to artificial "rules." Shaw's *Candida* requires for its action only a single room, and about twelve hours; so also does Strindberg's *The Father*—though each is handled synthetically. The action of Giacosa's *Hapless Love* transpires in a single room within a single day. In certain of the purely naturalistic dramas of Hauptmann, designed to present a consecutive series of events, the unities of both time and place are rationally observed. In *Das Friedensfest*, notably, the tragedy is enacted in a single room during the latter half of a single day. In the most notable of Galsworthy's dramas, *Strife*, "the action takes place on February 7th between the hours of noon and six in the afternoon, close to the Trenartha Tin Plate Works, on the borders of England and Wales, where a strike has been in progress throughout the winter." In *The Two Mr. Wetherbys* of St. John Hankin, the scene is Mr. James Wetherby's house, and the action takes some twenty hours, from the afternoon of one day to the afternoon of the next. These, and innumerable other illustrations from the plays of modern dramatists which might be given, only go to demonstrate the true

rationale of the unities of time and place, their genuine efficacy in the compact handling of culminant situations.

Certain substitutes for the "ideal" treatment of time, common in the Continental drama of the last century, have been employed with excellent effect by certain contemporary dramatists. In *The Two Mr. Wetherbys* "the curtain is dropped for a moment halfway through Act II to represent the lapse of three hours," the same device is employed by Pinero in *Iris*, by Barker in *Waste*, by Galsworthy in *The Silver Box*. The most significant employment of the unity of time, as a new technical treatment, is the representation of an action which takes a longer time in production than would the events or conversations in actual life. Ibsen furnished an illustration of this in a portion of *John Gabriel Borkman*. Another technical innovation is the "scene individable," the action in time, though broken by curtains, being continuous. Kennedy's *The Servant in the House*, a conspicuous illustration, was a pioneer in the employment of this technical device in English drama. Modern dramatists, notably Strauss and von Hofmannsthal in *Elektra*, Strindberg in *Creditors*, Shaw in *Getting Married*, to mention a few examples, exhibit a scene in which the time is unbroken. In the case of the last-mentioned play, the curtain was lowered twice during the course

of the production—not because the action involved any intervals, but only as a concession to the need for relaxation on the part of the audience, liable to fatigue through the strain of unduly prolonged attention.

Dramatists like Hauptmann and Shaw, after Ibsen, have dispensed with the division of acts into scenes; and it is but the next step in technical advance to abolish division of a play into acts. In the preface to *Miss Julia*, Strindberg says: "I have tried to abolish the division into acts. And I have done so because I have come to fear that our decreasing capacity for illusion might be unfavorably affected by intermissions during which the spectator would have time to reflect and to get away from the suggestive influence of the author-hypnotist. My play will probably last an hour and a half, and as it is possible to listen that length of time, or longer, to a lecture, a sermon, or a debate, I have imagined that a theatrical performance could not become fatiguing in the same time. . . . My hope is still for a public educated to the point when it can sit through a whole-evening performance in a single act. But that point cannot be reached without a great deal of experimentation." The most remarkable result of such experimentation is the opera *Elektra*. As conducted by Strauss himself in Berlin, *Elektra* gave me the most tremendous emotional experience.

It leaves one emotionally drenched, physically exhausted. The dramatic evocation of mood, sustained without intermission for two hours and more, tries one to the extreme limit of esthetic emotional endurance.

The age in which we live, subject to the influence of scientific research, is responsible in great measure for the intensive treatment of themes in modern dramatic practice. The vast extension of knowledge, the discovery of innumerable facts, laws, and principles governing the phenomena of human life, have compelled concentration upon the subjects of our examination. The telescope of the older epic poet has been exchanged for the microscope of the modern dramatist. It is just because modern life opens for us such panoramic vistas and widens so extensively the horizon of human possibility that we are forced to restrict ourselves to a limited field of vision. It is only through a microscopic examination of a small group of factors operating within a restricted field that we are enabled to arrive at exact knowledge. At the same time, there is involved in the examination an exhaustive knowledge of all antecedent factors in the evolutionary chain of causation. It is for these reasons, primarily, that Ibsen, the greatest technician in the modern dramatic movement, has consistently employed in his social dramas the analytic treatment which is equiva-

lent, for this form, to a genuine technical discovery.

There are, to be sure, two possibilities always open to the dramatist: the synthetic treatment, in which the action is begun, continued, and completed entirely within the limits of the play itself; and the analytic treatment, in which the action shown is the culmination of a long series of events, the outcome of external actions and internal developments. Rudolph von Gottschall once said that the Greek tragedies were really only the fifth acts of tragedies. The dictum, only mediately true for Greek tragedy, is the distinctive characteristic of the social dramas of Ibsen. The analytic treatment is as old as drama itself; classic illustrations range all the way from the *Œdipus* of Sophocles and the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare to the *Maria Stuart* of Schiller and *Der Zerbrochene Krug* of Kleist. Yet at no time in the past has any dramatist, or any group of dramatists, subjected the dramatic art to analytical treatment for the creation of a chosen dramatic type. Of the Greek tragedies known to us, those treated analytically are notable as exceptions, not as types; Shakespeare, free spirit subject to unities neither of time nor of place, various, many-angled, discursive with all the arts of the rhetorician, the lyric and the epic poet, employed the synthetic treatment almost invariably, as the

technic best suited for the exhibition of his dramatic fables.

When we come to Ibsen, the scientific spirit of the age, with its demand for microscopic analysis in the interest of exact truth, immediate, particularistic, compels the employment of a purely analytic treatment. During the course of a discussion of the complex problems raised by Ibsen's biography, which I had somewhat hesitantly undertaken, I once asked Dr. Sigurd Ibsen if his father ever acknowledged technical indebtedness to any dramatist who preceded him. The answer was significant. "I never heard my father acknowledge that he owed such a debt to any one," replied Dr. Ibsen—"with but a single exception: Friedrich Hebbel." If we study Hebbel's *Julia*, for example, conspicuous alike for analytic treatment and narrative technic, we may fully realize that Hebbel, on the technical side, was Ibsen's immediate forerunner and inspiration. In his social dramas, Ibsen aimed not at the presentation of situations as situations, but at a re-presentation of the intellectual and spiritual states of the souls of his characters. He achieved severely realistic transcripts of life by such vital projections. His plays are not manipulations, but creations of character—the inevitable events of an attitude toward life, a point of view, a frame of mind, a temperamental stamp. As Brandes put it: "The most

esteemed German dramatists who preceded him, notably Friedrich Hebbel, came to be regarded merely as his forerunners. The French dramatists, who in his youth were masters of the European stage, Alexandre Dumas and Émile Augier, became antiquated in the presence of his art. . . . With them there is still an intrigue of the old-fashioned type. One is told something from which he reacts. Such intrigues are never employed by Ibsen after the period of his youthful drama, *Lady Inger*. The essential features of the inner life of his characters are revealed. A veil is lifted and we observe the peculiar stamp of the personality. A second veil is lifted, and we distinguish its past. A third veil is drawn aside, and we discover the profoundest secrets of its nature."

The supreme technical achievement of Ibsen, one may fairly say his supreme technical innovation, has been the identification of the action with the exposition. It was that profound student of dramatic art, Friedrich Hebbel, who recognized in the separation of the action and the exposition the principal barrier between art and life. In the analytic dramas of Ibsen, there is no such thing as "preparation" in the French sense, no such thing as "exposition" in the old meaning. They are replaced by *explication*—the careful disentangling of the interlacing threads which constitute the dramatic fabric but stream out endlessly into the

past. Until Ibsen had freed himself from the influence of the French school, he continued to employ the purely synthetic treatment, in which the action develops itself before the audience. This is true of *The Pretenders, The Comedy of Love, Peer Gynt, Emperor and Galilean, The League of Youth.* The method is employed even in one of the later dramas, *An Enemy of the People,*—a singular circumstance which may be explained by the fact that it was a polemic piece, a play of external action, and was written in half the time Ibsen usually employed in writing a drama. A blending, a harmonization, of the two methods is employed in *The Pillars of Society, A Doll's House, The Lady from the Sea, Hedda Gabler, The Master Builder, Little Eyolf,* and *When We Dead Awaken;* the past and the present play nearly equal parts in conditioning and controlling the outcome. But in *Ghosts, Rosmersholm, The Wild Duck,* and *John Gabriel Borkman,* all the fundamental facts have already transpired before the opening of the play; and those episodes which appear before us are the necessary consequences of the earlier events. These dramas of explication, sometimes entitled the drama of the ripened situation, are masterpieces in the peculiar technic which Ibsen perfected: the unveiling, during the course of the dramatic development, of the entire soul-histories of the characters through their mutual confes-

sions; and the disclosure by this means of the entire fabric of the past as the determining and omnipotent force. This procedure I prefer to describe as the technic of *dévoilement*. If we slightly change the figure and employ an English word, we may describe it as the technic of denudation. In a well-known letter to Goethe, Schiller points out as a distinct advantage of the recessive procedure that the past, since it is irrevocable, is more truly terrifying than the present, with possibilities of freedom of choice. It may be true, as Schiller thought, that we are more deeply moved by the dread that something may have happened in the past than by the anticipatory fear that something may occur in the future. Certainly there is a steady deepening of the horror in the convergent series of disclosures unmasked by the frenzied King Œdipus, or revealed in the confessions of Helen Alving.

The real innovation achieved by Ibsen, Hauptmann, and the German naturalists was the employment of the technical methods of fiction in the creation of the new drama. Both the convergent treatment of the short story and the narrative discursiveness of the novel were freely utilized. It will be recalled, as a conspicuous illustration, that Hauptmann dedicated his first drama to "Bjarne P. Holmsen, most distinguished of naturalists, author of *Papa Hamlet*"—the pseudonym for

the collaborators Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf in a cycle of remarkable short stories. One notes with interest, in the contemporary drama, the presence of epic, in contradistinction to purely dramatic, qualities as a consequence of the influence of fiction. The most striking superficial illustration is the elaborate "stage-directions" of the realistic and naturalistic dramas—let us say of Shaw and Hauptmann. In reality these are no longer "stage directions": they are minute scenic descriptions and character delineations. For the first time in the history of the drama, the stage-direction becomes an intrinsic part of the play. The information contained in these scenic descriptions and character delineations in reality constitutes a wealth of epic detail.

A further feature to be noted in connection with the new technic is the new type of exposition which I have described as explication. In the drama of the ripened situation, the characters are already fully developed and only await some slight event to produce the catastrophe. Since the action is culminant, it must be continuous and generally rapid. In order to reveal all the antecedent events, essential to a true comprehension of the characters and the story, the dramatist is driven to employ the convenient and familiar technic of the novel. Compelled to discard the approved French technic of an initial act of exposition, the

modern realist slowly and only by degrees, throughout the entire piece, skillfully unravels the interwoven threads of antecedent happening. Narrative here begins to supersede "action" in the modern drama. For narration of dramatic intensity and pictorial appeal is needed effectively to reveal the long chain of causation which has led to the crisis exhibited in the drama itself. Narration in dialogue form, of scenes dramatic in effect, thus necessarily supersedes, in large measure, direct dramatic presentation. The method of fiction in sustained suspense is freely employed by the dramatist of the ripened situation. The most significant of all the revelations arising out of the antecedent events is reserved until the conclusion of the drama. The penalty of the method is revealed in the consideration that the complex web of antecedent events, which can only be conveyed to our senses through narration, becomes vastly more important, dramatically as well as determinatively, than the events of the actual drama itself. From the standpoint of technic, we have here another type of illustration of the mutation theory of De Vries. Scientifically regarded, the drama of recessive action arises from the projection of the explicative methods of fiction into the field of the drama treated as pure culmination.

Great as is the technical contribution of

Ibsen, especially in the case of the drama of explication with analytic handling, there are tremendous difficulties in the way of its successful employment. Indeed, Ibsen has had few followers in the successful employment of this form. A very fine specimen of the analytic treatment is Sudermann's *Heimat*, which may be regarded as a widening series of successive crises. A true disciple of Ibsen in his technical methods is the young Dane, Hjalmar Bergström, whose *Karen Borneman* is a signal specimen of the drama of *dévoilement*. Neither Zola's *Renée* (the dramatization of *La Curée*) nor *Thérèse Raquin* are successful treatments, from the dramaturgic standpoint, of the nemesis of heredity. With all its fine qualities, Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang* falls far short of being a masterpiece. Ibsen is his own best imitator in *Rosmersholm* and *Hedda Gabler;* and it is noteworthy that the leading figure in the former play, which after the fashion of *Ghosts* Ibsen intended to name *White Horses*, is the ancestral spirit of the house of Rosmer. In *Miss Julia*, Strindberg has achieved a masterpiece in the particular form employed—although here the influence of the past is insufficiently inter-related with the lively action of the present. Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, in his case marked by the employment of severe economy of means, is a true drama of explication, not lack-

ing in a certain restraint in treatment; but, driven by his ineradicable sense of the ridiculous, Shaw has greatly weakened the play's effect by shattering unity of impression through the gruesome, cynical levity of Frank. Ibsen alone has exhibited in its ripened perfection the form of drama best adapted to the treatment of heredity. He alone has stamped upon us in the theatre the dread conviction, as voiced by Wilde: "Heredity is Nemesis without her mask. It is the last of the Fates and the most terrible. It is the only one of the gods whose real name we know."

There is one other weakness of the drama of explication, with purely analytic treatment, which, in all probability, best suffices to explain the lack of cosmopolitan appeal in the theater of Ibsen's supreme technical achievements. This type of drama involves the elimination of vivid action, the abandonment of the continuous succession of slight novelties in event, calculated to hold attention and win the throng. Since only the culminant situation is exhibited, a large part of the "action" must consist in explication—achieved in more or less natural ways through mutual confessions in the conversation of the characters. Persons who have not seen each other in a long time are more or less naturally brought together; and our knowledge of the past is derived through the conversations in which they en-

lighten each other over the events which have transpired since their last meeting. The "exposition" of the conventional drama of former time is thus replaced by retrospective narrative, dexterously couched in the hesitant, exclamatory, broken dialogue of normal daily life. The retrospective narrative, though referring to antecedent events, is animated, accusatory—enlivened throughout with gestures, hints, implications rich in dramatic suggestiveness. Nevertheless, this continual, enforced reference to the antecedent events gives a distinctly retrospective cast to such dramas. The drama loves action more than contemplation, regnant prophecy more than mellow retrospection. Ibsen has written for an age which has passed the first flush of youth. The drama of reminiscence, though perhaps the most difficult of all forms, is a drama with its face resolutely turned toward the past. The predilection of the great public is for the drama of anticipation and prophecy, buoyantly facing the future.

IV

THE NEW FORMS—REALISM AND THE PULPIT STAGE

"May we then secure a theater where we may be horrified over the horrible, laugh over the laughable, play with the playful; where we can see everything and not be offended, when we see what lies concealed behind theological and esthetic veils, even if the old conventional laws must be broken; may we secure a free theater, where we shall have freedom for all things save to have no talent and to be a hypocrite or a fool!"—AUGUST STRINDBERG.

FROM out of the welter and mass of modern dramatic literature, certain general principles may be disengaged through a careful analysis of the works of the leading dramatic artists. This careful analysis suffices to exhibit a certain number of dramatic forms which may be denominated new, not in the sense of merely possessing novelty, but in the exact sense that they are forms hitherto unrealized in the history of dramatic art. It shall be our concern, then, to classify and distinguish these distinctively new types of drama.

If we abandon for the nonce the employment of the words realism and naturalism, because of their uncertainty and vagueness, I think we shall see

that the most distinctive form of drama contributed by contemporary art is what may be termed the *drama of immediate actuality.* There were two prime reasons why the earlier dramatists failed to create such a type. In the first place, the theater—which Shaw has aptly defined as "the last sanctuary of unreality"—was conceived as the arena for the violent, the exceptional, the adventitious, the coincidental. The more startling the external event, the greater the success. Disguises, transformations, substitutions lent an air of quaint attractiveness to the plays of the Greeks, the Romans, of the French classicists, and of the Elizabethans. The dénouement of countless plays was made to turn upon a happily discovered, but hitherto unsuspected, fact which did not untie but, Alexander-like, only cut the Gordian knot—making providential provision for every character and dismissing the audience with a delightful sense of justice poetically administered. In the second place, there was an instinctive reaction against the policy of approaching too close to real life. The psychological drama of the past, with its exhaustive searchings into the mysteries of the human heart, the profundities of the human soul, erected one last barrier between the audience and the scene. This barrier was the *locale*, the environmental circle within which the characters moved. The characters, even when

they were modern in tendency and contemporary in conception, were placed in scenes far remote, both geographically and temporally, from the audience. In the vast majority of cases, a romantic setting was chosen, because of its likelihood to lure the audience away from the oppressing sense of actuality abundantly afforded by real life. Strange and outlandish countries—the stranger and the more outlandish the better!—antique castles, grim prisons, gloomy monasteries, desert islands—these were the ancient properties with which the dramatic figures, even when animated by contemporary freshness and vital modern temperament, were forcibly endowed. Whether the complications were bizarre, outré, and adventitious; whether the setting was remote and fantastic; whether the actions were violent, brutal, barbaric—the result was the same: to fulfil the fundamental prerequisites of romance. These fundamental prerequisites were the employment of a continuous succession of novelties; the constant pictorial appeal to fancy and imagination; and the general purpose to transport the audience to a realm more strange, more beautiful, more wonderful than the garish world of *tous les jours.* In regard to this conventional drama, Maeterlinck has happily said: "Indeed, when I go to the theater, I feel as though I were spending a few hours with my ancestors, who conceived life as

something that was primitive, arid, and brutal. . . . I am shown a deceived husband killing his wife, a woman poisoning her lover, a son avenging his father, a father slaughtering his children, children putting their father to death, murdered kings, ravished virgins, imprisoned citizens—in a word, all the sublimity of tradition, but alas, how superficial and material! Blood, surface-tears, and death!"

With the advent of Ibsen, we mark the triumphant creation of a drama of immediate actuality. His fundamental data were two: people of to-day; time, the present. His drama is a combination of the older forms, in the sense that he avoided the unreal features of one, the unnatural features of the other. Under the ancient and classic formulæ, unreal people were placed in natural situations; real people were placed in unnatural situations; and not infrequently, unreal people were placed in unnatural situations. Ibsen set himself the severest of tasks: the placing of real people in natural situations. By real people, he understood people of to-day—of his own time, country, racial feeling, social hereditament. Nor was he content with observation alone as the artist's touchstone of reality. He insisted that the artist must be "extremely careful in discriminating between what one has observed and what one has experienced." Only this last, he main-

tains, can be "the theme for creative work." If we attend strictly to this, he says, "no every-day, commonplace subject will be too prosaic to be sublimated into poetry." And perhaps the most significant artistic utterance he ever made—the watchword of all true "realism"—is this: "And what is it then that constitutes a poet? As for me, it was a long time before I realized that to be a poet, that is chiefly to see, but mark well, to see in such a manner that the *thing seen is perceived by his audience just as the poet saw it.* But thus is seen and thus is appreciated that which has been lived through. And as regards *the thing which has been lived through, that is just the secret of the literature of modern times.* All that I have written these last ten years (1864-74), I have, mentally, lived through. But no poet lives through anything isolated. What he lives through all his countrymen live through together with him. For if that were not so, what would establish the bridge of understanding between the producing and the receiving mind?"

Such a supreme test necessarily requires that the dramatist deal with people of his own world, of his own time, of his own race. The drama of immediate actuality accomplishes at once this prime purpose: the identification of the audience with the play. As you witness a modern play of Ibsen, of Björnson, of Hauptmann, you recognize

yourself in the characters and your life in theirs. And this, after all, is the supreme criterion for dramatic "realism." It is this quality of "recognition" that makes memorable one of Clyde Fitch's plays, *The Truth*, with its almost diaphanous realism and keen sense for local color. In the theater, are we the spectators, separated from the dramatic characters by a barrier of the footlights? Is this a mere spectacle that is being set before us, to amuse, to cajole, to flatter, with ancient tricks of structure and modern novelties of invention? Surely not, if the realist has, in Ibsen's phrase, "established the bridge of understanding between the producing and the viewing mind." Then, indeed, can we live, vitally, intensely, in the scene being enacted before us, identify ourselves with the characters, and suffer, laugh, rejoice with them as with the living people of our own world. We are not enticed into lending our attention: we give ourselves up utterly to the experience, forgetting that there are footlights, curtain, or indeed that we are in a theater at all. After *A Doll's House* the bold bloodshed and gaudy theatricism of the past imposed upon Ibsen never again. The violent, the exceptional moment of life has yielded place in the theater to the claims of present actuality—*life itself*—with its problems of predestination and freedom, will and inclination, passion and restraint.

Just as the modern biologist concerns himself with the life forms of animals and the evolution of types, so the modern realist scientifically studies the life forms of human beings and the evolution of certain psychological, social, and ethical types. Especially is this procedure notable and conspicuous in the denotement of the modern woman. No longer are we shown women as "fantastic sugar dolls," goddesses upon pedestals, angelic saints aureoled with cloistral sanctity, to be worshiped from afar. Nor, on the other hand, will she continue to be portrayed as the domestic drudge, the plaything, and the toy of the average selfish and sensual man. Ibsen was the first dramatic realist to force upon modern consciousness the immediate realization of to-day that woman is a human being, with character as broad and deep, with rights as sweeping and sacred, as those of man.

It may, with considerable justice, be urged that Ibsen has never obtained popular success in the English-speaking countries. The adequate reply is that, whether we do or do not like Ibsen is quite beside the mark. After seeing Ibsen played greatly—as I have seen him played in Christiania, in Berlin, in Chicago;—after descending to the depths of human misery with Hauptmann, or running the gamut of tragic experience with Strindberg—it is impossible to experience the old insouciant enjoyment in the inanities of

the fashionable society-comedy, the lurid melodrama, or the machine-made pieces of the theater of commerce. After the deep realities of *The Wild Duck*, we turn with disgust from the vapid pruriency of *The Spring Chicken!* What theatric and glucose sentimentality is *La Dame aux Camellias* after the high seriousness and enfranchising veracity of *A Doll's House!* How unendurable a *Zaza* after the religious yearning, the mystic sensitivity of *Beyond Human Power!* "What we have learned from Ibsen," says Bernard Shaw, "is that our fashionable dramatic material is worn out as far as cultivated modern people are concerned. What really interests such people on the stage is not what we call *action*—meaning two well-known and rather short-sighted actors pretending to fight a duel without their glasses or a handsome leading man chasing a beauteous leading lady round the stage with threats, obviously not feasible, of immediate rapine—but stories of lives, discussion of conduct, unveiling of motives, conflict of characters in talk, laying bare of souls, discovery of pitfalls—in short, *illumination of life.*"

The second great contribution to the modern drama is what has been unfortunately denominated the drama of ideas. A more accurately descriptive title would be the *drama of intellectual content.* In this sense, I assert that the mod-

ern drama began with Ibsen, not because he was the first great contemporary realist, but primarily because he inaugurated an epoch in art by giving an absolutely novel exemplification of the function of the drama. For centuries past, the critics have been saying what they continue to say to-day: that the dramatist "cannot express more than the average of the prevailing opinions, of the ideas current in the surrounding social medium." He must address in the theater, we are baldly told, not a set of distinct individuals, but the collective spirit of the species. That is to say, his is a problem in vital mathematics: to find the greatest common denominator of the composite public. Under such a conception, the dramatist's real audience is, specifically, the *esprit de corps*. As the psychologist, Gustave Le Bon, expresses it, again mathematically, the drama is a "function of the crowd." This astounding, yet persistent, modern idea is admirably expressed in Johnson's familiar lines:

> "The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
> And we who live to please, must please to live."

Ibsen was the first man in the history of the drama who deliberately threw over this misguided idea, grown a-weary of "telling a lie in an heroic couplet." It is not the drama's patrons, but the dramatist's practice, which gives the laws of the drama. So passionate was his love for the ancient

world that Swinburne once declared that he wrote his plays for antiquity. Ibsen, for his part, dedicated his work to posterity. Wagner magniloquently pronounced his music-dramas "art work of the future." In a very definite sense, Ibsen and Wagner were the first great Futurists in art. The fundamental differentia of the new dramatist is his demand for that large independence of rules and systems which Turgenev posited as the indispensable condition for great art. Just as Zola, the founder of naturalism, enlarged the conception of function of the novel, sublimating it into a powerful and far-reaching instrumentality of moral purpose, so the new dramaturgic iconoclast demands the stage as a medium for the dissemination of the most advanced views—upon standards of morality, rules of conduct, codes of ethics, and philosophies of life. His primal distinction arises from the discovery of the ever-alarming and heretical doctrine that life is greater than art. He has done away with the impotent conception of art for art's sake. He has ushered in the new era of art for life's sake.

In the great majority of cases, as a study of the genesis of his dramas proves, Ibsen created his dramas from an initial starting-point of some general idea or ideas. "First of all, Ibsen jotted down memoranda by which he clarified the intellectual problem and set the drama, in embryo, as

under a miscroscope, before his eyes. These memoranda are usually of a philosophical, psychological, or sociological nature, pungent observations upon life, criticisms of contemporary society, epigrams, thumb-nail sketches of character. These noted ideas gradually seemed to group themselves, as if with sub-conscious design, around some generality of thought—a nuclear accretion around some central point. After a time, the principal characters of his projected play, minutely observed from life but always transmuted in his poetic consciousness, begin to assume definite psychological character and highly individual attributes. Then Ibsen seems to have brought this experiential conception to bear upon the epigrammatic idea forms preserved in haphazard memoranda. This intrusion of his dramatic conception into the field of his general ideas produced a remarkable effect—the general ideas at once began to group themselves into symmetrical designs of definite contours." In this analysis of mine we see that the drama developed from quite general ideas; but at the same time we must realize that Ibsen never wove his general ideas into a play solely for their own sakes. His plays must thus be thought of, not as thesis-plays merely embodying one germ-idea, but as artistic recreations of human experience in the light of some general idea or ideas.

The true dramatic realist does not create a drama for the mere object of expounding a given thesis. Nor does he permit his general idea to drain his characters of naturalness and verisimilitude, leaving the mere puppets to exhibit the operation of his intellectual design. But he accepts a problem, a generalization on life, a sociological datum, as the basis, the ground-plan for his structure. In accordance with this plan, he erects his drama; each part must structurally conform to the general scheme, and at the same time be consistent within itself—an unit within a larger unit.

It cannot be urged too strongly that the thesis-drama is a mistaken form of the drama of ideas, of intellectual content, in the true sense. The fundamental defect of the thesis-plays of Dumas *fils*, who may properly be said to have given the finishing touches to the "oeuvre á thèse," is patent after very slight inspection. In a thesis, a generality about life and conduct, a certain moral precept is implicit. The purpose of a thesis-drama, therefore, is to demonstrate some general idea by means of particular incidents or series of incidents shown upon the stage. The thesis dramatist does not wish to present life, to draw from it the meanings implicit therein. He desires to "prove something"; and in consequence he dexterously marshals his figures and his incidents for that purpose

and that purpose only. This procedure is alien to the whole spirit of imaginative art, and places the art of drama on a plane with the science of mathematics. It is that species of "dramatic algebra" of which Lessing so contemptuously spoke: once all the factors on each side of the dramatic equation have been canceled out with each other, the demonstration is complete. Zero is equal to zero. In the last analysis, art is an esthetic process, not a scientific procedure. Art can never demonstrate anything. It is impossible to affirm accurately that the conclusions deduced from specific instances of real or imagined experience do actually typify a general idea, or enforce an universal truth. "All these things (imagined experiences)," says the intuitivist, Éduard Rod, "are mere 'jeux d'esprit' of which I should not think of denying the pleasantness, and I admit that we are indebted to them for works which have moved us. But, if they have inspired a few, I fear they have spoiled a good many and corrupted fine talents. Nothing warps observation more than to demand of it *a priori* conclusions for or against a general idea, especially when the idea itself is the subject of controversy."

Ibsen, Björnson, Hauptmann have written great dramas of ideas; but the characters were not designed to illustrate and enforce these ideas. The fundamental generalizations upon life, conduct,

and morality lay implicit in the characters of these people, who were as real to the dramatists as the people of their personal acquaintance. By illuminating the interiors of their very souls, showing them in crucial situations, depicting soul-struggles transpiring within them, the great dramatist of the contemporary school convicts and confounds his audience with a consciousness of the reality, the sternness, the infinite possibilities of human life. To awaken thought through emotion—such has often been narrowly defined to be the true and inalienable function of the drama. The contemporary realist fully recognizes the moral quality of all human experience, and avails himself of it to the utmost degree. It is not enough to make mere "slices of life"; for life, with all its welter and confusion, is not instructive, amusing, or edifying, taken in slices. The business of the dramatist is to choose, from out this confused mass, certain characters placed in certain situations which implicitly carry their own meaning. Holding the kodak up to nature results in a "comédie rosse" of the grosser *Théâtre Libre;* only supremely discriminative selection will result in the great drama. In the sense employed by Goethe in speaking of Molière, we may justly say that the dramatist of the new school chastises us by painting us just as we are. The meaning, profound, disquieting, lurk-

ing implicit in his dramas of contemporary life, compels us to think deeply over the problems which he has raised—but not solved!—long after the immediate emotional disturbance set up by the play itself has subsided. Often the emotional derangement effected by a play results in rasping our nerves, rather than in "purging us through pity and fear"; but the calm reflection, which follows the witnessing of a drama informed by great ideas and portrayed by vital characters in natural situations, has a distinct moral value. Moral excitation means nothing more nor less than a summons toward the ordering of life upon a plane of purer thought and wider justice. "If thus the theater often causes me to think about certain problems," says the Russian critic, Ignatoff, "a habit is formed which is extremely useful in life, if these problems closely concern humanity. . . . The theater which stimulates thought not only leads us to sympathize with the weak and unfortunate, but also to consider ways and means of helping them, and such reflection is a step toward participation in human affairs."

The modern spirit in the drama, it must be clearly indicated, is not achieved by the mere vapid renovation of ancient properties. The modern dramatist is not an intellectual sloven, merely following the laggard snail-pace of the crowd. He must not only keep in vital touch with his age, in

order that his meaning and purpose may be comprehensible to his audience; he must be in advance of his age. As Ibsen puts it, he must be a *franc-tireur* along the firing line of progress. It has been shown that the application of biological principles to the drama as an evolutionary form must be radically modified in order to take account of the individual factor of the dramatist. For from the dramatist himself proceeds that art form which may open new paths for the future advance of the drama. The characters which he creates must conform to the spirit of the age; it is not enough that they be mere abstract chronometers of the time. Within them must lie the fertile, suggestive seeds of progress. They must be dynamic, evolutional, forward-moving, upward-looking, facing the future. The greatest dramas of the contemporary period may justly be regarded as heralds of a new time. They announce the dawn of a new culture.

The *social drama,* it may be surmised, is the third contribution of contemporary dramatic art. These are plays which start into life through the quickening touch of the contemporary; and which endeavor to furnish forth an interpretation of society through the illuminative intermediary of all that is most vitally fecund, most prophetic, in the science, sociology, philosophy, and religion of to-day. They are concerned with all the crucial

instances of the seething and tumultous life of to-day—with the conflicts of social classes; the struggle of the individual with existent institutions, current conventions, social determinism; the conflict of human wills with recalcitrant circumstances. If the drama of immediate actuality is human, if the drama of intellectual content is humane, the social drama is essentially humanitarian in principle. Nor is the true aim of such a drama to be concealed: the exposure of civic abuse, the redress of social wrong, and the regeneration and reform of society. These it well may achieve through classic means: artistic fidelity to fact, satiric unmasking of human folly, and veritistic embodiment of human passion.

The modern dramatist, bred on the exciting ferment subsequent to the French Revolution, and fired with the passion for individualism, which was the intellectual keynote of the nineteenth century, raised the standard of revolt against the brutalities and tyrannies of modern civilization. The conflict of the modern social drama is the conflict of the individual with his environment, his heredity and his social hereditament: the individual against the world. A man like Ibsen, moved to philosophic doubt by Nietzsche, to scientific anarchy by Darwin and Haeckel, to social criticism by John Stuart Mill and Henry George, clearly came to realize that for the future the artist's attitude

toward life must be not only revelative: it must be redemptive as well. The modern drama must be, not only a mirror to reflect surfaces veraciously, but also a Röntgen ray to penetrate the surface and reveal, beneath the superficial integument, the fundamental framework and structure of modern life.

It does not follow that the school of Ibsen sanctions propaganda as an artistic aim. The play which preaches is seldom art. The modern thinker, be he novelist or dramatist, can no longer ignore the social inequalities and graver social injustices which confront him at every turn. The artist may, and indeed often does, create a work full of profound social implication—without having a direct moral or social "purpose" in view. A specimen is that fine work of dramatic art, theatrical in the legitimate sense, Echegaray's *El Gran Galeoto*. It is not the artist's immediate desire, in this type of play, to effect any special reform or correct any specific abuse. He has studied, observed, absorbed a certain group or phase or aspect of contemporary social conditions, and these he has depicted with all the dexterity and skill which he can command. Seen through the strongly colored prism of his own individual temperament, the picture will likely appear to be significant, purposeful, rich in social implication. The ideal course for the true artist

to pursue, as outlined by Galsworthy, is: "To set before the public no cut-and-dried codes, but the phenomena of life and character, selected and combined, but not distorted, by the dramatist's outlook, set down without fear, favor, or prejudice, leaving the public to draw such poor moral as nature may afford. This method requires a certain detachment; it requires a sympathy with, a love of, and a curiosity as to, things for their own sake; it requires a far view, together with patient industry, for no immediate practical result." Galsworthy's own play, *The Fugitive*, is a very high modern example of the exhibition of the true pity and terror evoked by the tragedy which follows a breach of current social and legal codes.

Such a drama, as thus outlined, when it concerns itself with distinctively social questions and problems, may be denominated the *drama of social implication*. The most successful European practitioner in this type of drama, fortified by a clearly defined thesis, is Paul Hervieu. The author of *Le Dédale* has carried the thesis-drama to a very high pitch of excellence; his subtlety as a psychologist gives depth and carrying power to dramas which might otherwise appear merely symmetrical or schematic in construction. Severe logician, astute social thinker, Hervieu has succeeded in charging his tragedies with a certain

dynamic intellectual quality. The practice of contemporary dramatists, however, has thrust forward into view a second type of social drama more explicit in its purpose. This may be entitled the *drama of sociologic injunction.* The social dramas of Ibsen and of Galsworthy belong to the former class. In his *To-morrow*, Mr. Percy Mackaye has given a promising anticipation, in this type, of the greater American drama of the future. Ibsen declared that his vocation was interrogation, not affirmation. Galsworthy has disclaimed conscious purpose for the redress of immediate social evils —notably in the case of *Justice.* The social dramas of Shaw and of Brieux—though neither can be termed a realist in the sense in which I have employed the term—belong to the latter class. An interesting comparison is afforded by Ibsen and Shaw—the one as an exponent of the drama of social implication, and the other as an exponent of the drama of sociologic injunction.

The three types of serious drama find exemplification in the work of the Greeks, the Elizabethans, and that of the contemporary school. In Greek tragedy we discern the inevitable conflict of the individual with Fate. Œdipus the King, of Sophocles, succumbs dumbly to the decree of an immitigable, foreordained destiny. The hero

of the Greek drama does not, like Kipling's racy American,

"Match with destiny for beers";

he matches with destiny for life, and loses—against the loaded dice of the gods. The second type of tragedy came with Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Elizabethans. Destiny became synonymous with human character itself. In every human being is lodged at once a heaven and a hell. Hamlet struggles vainly against forces within himself which he cannot overmaster and control. When we come to the time of Ibsen and Hauptmann, the individual has begun to take to heart the social doctrine that he is his brother's keeper. Temperamental, biological, above all social determinism in one form or another—is the modern equivalent of ancient fatality. In *The Weavers*, an oppressed class struggles pitifully, dementedly against a social condition which they can neither ameliorate nor remedy. Dr. Stockman, in *An Enemy of the People*, comes into sharp conflict with society and the "world." The ancient tragic terror has become softened into something which seems very like social pity and altruistic concern. Stockman's is not a tragedy of blood, or a tragedy of death; indeed it is not a tragedy at all. It is a serious comedy, a tragi-comedy, of only temporary and individual failure. Some day that "damned compact liberal majority"—the social

conspiracy of financial self-interest—shall yield before the puissant might of social right and moral justice.

As Ibsen, together with his followers, may be said to have created a new type of drama, the pure social tragi-comedy, so Bernard Shaw, together with Brieux and others, may be said to have invented a new type of drama, the pure social comedy. Essentially social in his spirit and economic in his outlook, Shaw always pitches his comedies in a militant key. He frankly confesses that his object is to make people uncomfortable —and who would venture to gainsay him? In the theater of Shaw, "we are not flattered spectators killing an idle hour with an ingenious and amusing entertainment: we are 'guilty creatures sitting at a play.'" Shaw has not hesitated to set before the public, through the medium of comedy, those views and codes of life which he himself holds with utter tenacity. Shaw's comedies, because of the vexatious insistence he displays in exploiting his own theories of social morality, are lacking in the quality of stable equilibrium. Though deficient in the note of urbanity, though vehemently, almost hysterically directed against outworn morals and decadent civilization, they succinctly fulfil Meredith's test of comedy: they awaken our thoughtful laughter. Bergson has acutely defined laughter as a social

gesture. In the light of Shaw's comedies, one might almost define laughter as a sociologic symptom. Shaw seeks to shatter that something rigid and mechanical, encrusted upon the living body of modern thought, morals, and society. His comedies, in the last analysis, are frantic sociologic ebullitions upon the surface of modern dramatic art. If social pity is the underlying motive of the later Russian novelists, if humanitarian concern is the moving force of the dramas of Ibsen, Björnson, Hauptmann, and their followers, sociologic indignation is the driving force in the dramas of Shaw and Brieux.

It was D'Alembert, a scientist, who said that the stage was "morals carried into action; rules reduced to examples." This pronouncement may literally be interpreted as a prophecy of the contemporary drama of social morality. The fundamental weakness of the drama of sociologic injunction is the temptation therein afforded the dramatist, not to evoke a true picture of human life, but to construct a "thesis-play" which purports to enforce a general principle by means of a particular example. Dramas which wrest the facts of life from their true setting in the effort to enforce a particular thesis are indefensible from the standpoint of esthetics. But the best examples of the drama of sociologic injunction escape this criticism by creating the

dramatic conjuncture out of the individual and social obligations of the chosen theme. The writer of the modern drama of sociologic injunction often deliberately assumes the surplice of the priest of art, and employs the theater as the pulpit from which he hurls his anathemas at the churlish throng. This is not an esthetic process, but an ethical procedure. The ancient impassibility has given place to a passionate sense of social obligation to speak out, to pronounce judgment *ex cathedra*, to hand down the tables of the new social commandments. In limning a word-picture of the insouciant audacity of the characteristic type of contemporary art and life, Mr. Gilbert Chesterton recently said: "We know we are brilliant and distinguished, but we do not know that we are right. We swagger in fantastic artistic costumes; we praise ourselves; we fling epigrams right and left; we have the courage to play the egotist, and the courage to play the fool, but we have not the courage to preach." Mr. Chesterton, we suspect, must have been thinking of himself and his Protean rôles when he wrote this passage; he certainly could not have been thinking of a novelist like Zola or Tolstoy, of a dramatist like Brieux or Shaw. These men fully realize and eagerly assume the sacerdotal functions of the modern artist. Brieux looks upon the theater as an institution for social instruction

and moral injunction no whit inferior to the Church. During the most active period of his career as a dramatic critic, Shaw won attention not merely through his cleverness; he caught and held his audience because he was not content with writing only dramatic criticism. He persisted in writing of the theater, indeed in preaching about the theater, as a "factory of thought, a prompter of conscience, an elucidator of social conduct, an armory against despair and dullness, and a temple of the Ascent of Man." It is becoming well recognized to-day that the theater has actually begun to challenge the Church as an instrumentality for inculcating in the popular throng just and adequate codes of individual and social conduct. In this day, when hundreds of thousands of people daily witness motographic representations of the vast dramas of the life of Christ, of Ben Hur, of such secular sermons as Sienkiewickz's *Quo Vadis*, or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, one may readily realize the challenge of this new feature of dramatic representation, not only to the claims, but also to the achievements of the Church, as a "prompter of conscience" and "an elucidator of social conduct." When the modern social dramatist re-enforces the visual appeal, and the trenchant "argument of the flesh," with the tremendously potent argument of dramatized morals and philosophy, couched in the most telling

phraseology and fortified with all the arts of the orator, the dialectician, and the preacher, it is easy to foresee the immense social rôle the theater is predestined to play in the civilization of the future.

The Church—one needs but to affirm it to win acceptance of the affirmation almost without the necessity for argument—is steadily losing ground, both in directness of appeal and potency of effect. Everywhere are to be encountered not merely signs of a "growing unrest," but an active protest against the social passivity of the modern Church. The insincerity and cowardice of the great mass of those who hold the church pulpits of to-day is in nothing so clearly demonstrated as in their evasion of the monumental task of making their religious practice square with their intellectual theories. So long as creed and not conduct remains the test of "revealed religion," so long will the Church be threatened by the challenge of a great social institution so powerful as the theater, in which conduct and applied morality do actually constitute the fundamental test. The difference between the Church and the theater finds its analogy in the difference between critical commentary and narrative literature. The former is concerned with description; the latter is concerned with representation. Nor would it even be accurate to complete the analogy, since the Church has

shirked the prime requisite of all criticism: sincerity. The average church-goer distrusts the average preacher; for he knows that the deeper problems of the origin, growth, and authenticity of the Scriptures are sedulously avoided, through a craven fear that admission of doubt about any portion of the Scriptures may tend to shake and undermine the foundations of Christian belief. In consequence, the preacher impotently falls back upon the endlessly monotonous practice of Scriptural exegesis, and thereby only succeeds in widening the chasm which has begun to yawn between the Church's "teaching" and the great central realities of practical living.

Fine art, it has long been recognized, is one of the most potent instrumentalities known for the inculcation of moral principles. The force of example, the illustration of personal conduct in actual or imagined life, is rightly believed to be unparalleled in its influence upon the life of man. But life, nature, is only an unconscious teacher: it may indifferently influence to good or lead to evil. The attribution of conscious intellectual or moral design to nature—the fanciful diversion of a Maeterlinck or the philosophical speculation of a Bergson—is at best a scientific hypothesis; and at worst an artistic fancy. Fine art is selection; the dramatist carefully chooses from out the welter and chaos of actual or imagined incidents,

those particular incidents which establish a chain of intellectual, social, or moral causation. The drama, as the most objective of all the arts—since it is at once the indissoluble union and coalescence of all the arts—exerts an influence in moral propaganda that has never been calculated, for the very reason that it is incalculable. The modern social dramatist, who is both true to the principles of his art and instinct with definite moral purpose, becomes an interpreter of life—the guardian of life's holy mysteries, the prophet of life's vaster hopes and possibilities.

The theater is beginning to influence a wider circle of human beings than the Church. The congregation, approximately speaking, is always the same—from Sunday to Sunday. The audience in the theater changes from night to night. The Church as a social force is steadily losing ground; the theater as a social force is rapidly gaining ground. It is almost needless to point out, in this connection, that it is just because the Church does not live up to its possibilities and its responsibilities as an engine of social service that it is leaving indifference and apathy in its wake. To identify with, to utilize for, its own transcendant purposes, the potentialities of a science such as eugenics, of an art such as the drama, is one of the obvious ways in which the Church may hope and confidently expect to regain its hold

over the minds, the hearts, and the consciences of men.

Such a conspicuous exemplar of the contemporary drama of sociologic injunction as Brieux frankly says: "It is my nature to preach. . . . I have always wanted to preach. My plays all have a purpose. That is why I write them. Had I lived in the seventeenth century, I would have been a preacher. Then the Church wielded an enormous influence. But now, I write plays. The theater is what attracts people; there you can get them. And I want to bring the problems before them. I want them to think about some of the problems of life. . . . I have tried to show how wrong it is to shirk responsibility. All evil comes from lack of feeling of responsibility—of the individual for the individual, and of the classes for each other." Indeed, I think the greatest error which modern criticism has made proceeds from the vicious assumption that the social dramatist presumes to answer the questions which he raises. On the contrary, he arouses in the mind of the thoughtful spectator a most shocking sense of dubiety as to the wisdom of our conventional attitude of social indifference. The general problem, concretized by the dramatist in a highly specialized case, is brought sharply to the attention and to the conscience of the audience. The dramatist brings to his audience a sense of

conviction: we feel that we are somehow involved in the affair. The guilt of the *particeps criminis* weighs upon us. It is not for the dramatist, but for us, to find the solution of this social problem. Thus may be rectified some of the major evils, some of the intolerable injustices, of our modern civilization. Through the enlargement and deepening of the social conscience may come the juster and more humane social order of the future.

V

THE NEW FORMS—NATURALISM AND THE FREE THEATERS

"The individual can attain complete independence only when he liberates his soul from all external connections, from every objective relation, and, as a free subject, simply lives his own states of consciousness."—RUDOLF EUCKEN.

ON a bleak evening in October of the year 1887, some cabs deposited a group of critics at the narrow passage of the Elysée des Beaux-Arts, in Paris. Stumbling down this dark passage, they entered the door of No. 37. They were there, unwittingly, to assist at the birth of a new art: the art of naturalism in the theater. With raillery unconsciously prophetic, one of the critics, Jules Lemaître, in his next week's *feuilleton*, after describing his strange adventures, passes from jest to earnest with the query: "We had the air of good Magi in mackintoshes seeking out some lowly but glorious manger. Can it be that in this manger the decrepit and doting Drama is destined to be born again?"

The time was ripe in France, indeed in all Europe, for the revolt embodied in the *Théâtre*

Libre. On the basis of the scientific investigations of Cuvier, Taine had propounded his memorable theories of scientific criticism. "Beneath the shell was an animal and behind the document there was a man"—this classic phrase may well stand for the foundation stone of naturalistic criticism. Art, history, criticism, like zoölogy, had at last found its anatomy. Race, environment, epoch—these were the supreme pivots about which revolved the massive mechanism of modern scientific criticism. Man came to be regarded as the summation, the integration, of all antecedent influence, the creature of environment, the instrument of social momentum. Man came to be studied as an organism; criticism presumed to study the "laws of human vegetation."

In the early days of his literary apprenticeship, the young Émile Zola gained inspiration and instruction from his occasional chats with Taine. And in the course of a few years, Zola himself steps forth into the arena as the champion of naturalism in art, the art of both fiction and the drama. In his elaborate and monumental series of the Rougon-Macquart novels, Zola exhibits the members of a family basically affected not only by social influences and the pressure of environment, but also by physiological conditions inherited from their ancestors. It was his purpose to do away with the outworn models of his predecessors,

with their persistent idealization of the working-classes. "My book," he said in speaking of the unspeakable *L'Assommoir*, "is the first book which has the veritable odor of the people." To those of delicate sensibilities, this popular effluvia was, not unnaturally, highly distasteful. They held their noses; but—continued to read Zola. The scientific basis for his theories lent them an unquestioned strength and stability. The artist, under the naturalistic conception, discards the interest of the anecdote and the fable in favor of the interest which proceeds from a faithful and minute description of actuality. The new work was viewed as "simply an inquest on nature, beings, and things." Animated by this conception, Zola propounded his famous definition: "A work of art is a phase of creation seen through a temperament." Realism was content to observe; naturalism demanded scientific experimentation. Under the most vigorous canons of naturalism, the artist disclaimed the right either to moralize or to draw conclusions. With views colored assuredly by temperamental disposition, the naturalist sought only to reproduce life as it actually is at bottom, in the light of biological and social science.

The threatened invasion of the theater by the exponents of naturalism aroused the impassioned opposition of Dumas *fils*. "My literary standpoint is not the same as Zola's," he asserted, "on

some matters no agreement between us is possible. But he is a strong man; and what I particularly like about him is his d——d frankness." Three forces operated to create the drama of Augier and Dumas *fils*. First of all, they were the inheritors of the technical ideas of Eugene Scribe. Whatever may be urged against Scribe, on the score of poverty of ideas and weakness in psychology, certain it is that he was a master of technical craftsmanship. Although his plots were artificial and trivial, the study of character always subordinate to technical ingenuity, and the treatment of life which his plays embodied unworthy of being dignified by the name of criticism, he was a master in the art of preparation and intrigue, and succeeded in a remarkable way, through an artfully devised chain of situations, in holding the attention of his audience. So ingeniously and dexterously constructed were his theatrical pieces that they survived the harsh test of transplantation to other soils. *La Bataille de Dames* of Scribe and Legouvé, light enough to be popular anywhere, has already achieved a sort of eminence as a contemporary classic—in that *genre*. And so the entire civilized world was flooded with "well-made plays," adaptations from Scribe or perpetually renewed illustrations of the self-same model. Dexterity in the handling of plot and careful preparation of the crucial scenes came to be re-

garded everywhere as fundamental features of the dramatic form. Not Augier and Dumas *fils* only, but Ibsen and Björnson both served their apprenticeship to Scribe, and acquired a mastery in the technic of preparation and manipulation.

Augier and Dumas *fils*, under the influence of the earlier realistic conceptions, sought to draw from life with greater accuracy of detail. The incidents were more natural, the conversation more colloquial, the scenes more familiar and more intimate. And yet, when Zola went the last step and propounded his theories of the new experimentation, Dumas and his followers arose in revolt. In his reply to Zola, in the preface to the *Étrangère*, Dumas protests that since the theater is the art of preparation and of explanation, it can never yield to the demands of naturalism which neither prepares nor explains. Moreover, dominated by a passionate moral sense and endowed with the zeal of the social reformer, Dumas condemned naturalism on the score of its impassibility. The naturalistic drama, he averred, is a contradiction in terms. It is neither a work of art nor a moral demonstration—the two indispensable criteria of the authentic drama. "An artist," says Dumas most justly, "a true artist, has a higher and more difficult mission than the mere reproduction of what is: he has to discover

and reveal to us that which we do not see in things we look at every day—that which he alone has the faculty of perceiving in what is apparently patent to all of us."

For all the protests of Dumas, technically misguided or artistically valid, against the new theories, naturalism marched on to an irresistible invasion of the theater. The birth of the most fecund dramatic art of our own day dates from that bleak evening in 1887 when Faguet and his fellow-critics stumbled through the dark purlieus of Montmartre. The name of André Antoine is inextricably linked with the evolution of contemporary dramatic art. From him, on the side of managerial novelty, stems the fertile conception of the theater conducted purely in the interests of artistic experimentation. By forming an organization of patrons who supported his theater as a club is supported, and thereby avoiding the profit-seeking evils of the theater of commerce, Antoine paved the way for the experimental organizations of to-day, the *théâtre à coté*, and the later development of the short-run and repertory theaters. In the matter of scenic arrangement and detail, he proceeded upon the theory of Ibsen, who had defined the stage as a room of which one wall has been removed. In the art of acting, he demonstrated, in the face of limitless ridicule, his naturalistic theories by the aggressive and power-

ful verisimilitude of his dramatic incarnations. With the zeal of the artistic revolutionary, he dispensed absolutely with the "indispensable preparation" of Dumas; and gave at his theater pieces which came to be denominated as "slices of life" ("tranches de la vie"). Around him collected a group of men of distinguished talent: Pierre Wolff, Léon Hennique, George Ancey, Camille Fabre, and Eugene Brieux. Under his patronage were first produced *Ménage d'Artistes* and *Blanchette*, early dramatic works of the remarkable figure who has recently been denominated the most important dramatist produced by France since the days of Molière. The natural consequence of the libertarianism of Antoine was the production at his *Théâtre Libre*, not only of plays of French make, but also of remarkable dramas in the newer naturalistic manner. The very first list of productions announced by Antoine contained Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness (Puissance des Ténèbres);* and here in succession were produced such pieces of revolutionary tendencies as Ibsen's *Ghosts* (*Les Revenants*), Hauptmann's *Before Sunrise* (*Vor Sonnenaufgang*), Strindberg's *The Father* and *Miss Julia.* Hospitable to all the strange, new, and disquieting forces in the drama of the time, Antoine threw open the gates to experimentation. Only a few years after the memorable night of 1887, M. Faguet is found

boldly proclaiming: "The only theater in Paris at this moment is the *Théâtre Libre*."

It was not in France, incredible as it may sound, that naturalism as a dramatic form came to any sort of just fruition. The *Théâtre Libre* was a great blow struck in the cause of freedom for modern experimentation in the theater and in the drama. But in this cradle of the new art, no great naturalistic dramatist *de pur sang* was born. The master of Médan, a sort of presiding genius of the *Théâtre Libre*, began as the great exemplar of naturalism in the art of fiction. Not only did he never achieve mastery of the naturalistic drama: he never conquered the theater in any sense. The entire course of his subsequent development shows that behind the mask of naturalism was concealed a colossal romanticist, inspired by vast dreams and chimerical hopes of social and humanitarian reform. For all the stern forthrightness and acute psychology of his *Les Corbeaux* and *La Parisienne*, that remarkable talent, Henri Becque, succeeded neither in winning unconditional success in the French theater nor in achieving international eminence as a cosmopolitan figure. Brieux, vastly the most promising of all the fledglings of Antoine, soon burst the bonds of a confining naturalism; and eventually won a seat in the Academy for his genius as a dramatic author of the newer social and human-

itarian type. The greatest and most consistent champion of woman the contemporary drama has produced is the author of *Maternité*, *Les Avariés*, and *La Femme Seule*. It was not as a naturalistic artist, but as a skilful dramatic craftsman along the lines of a normal realism, that Brieux won his present place in the contemporary movement. And it cannot be doubted that his widening vogue outside of France, which in itself constitutes a definite forwarding of the principles of dramatic realism, is primarily due to the universal emergence of social problems and the increasing dominance of questions concerning the status of woman in the society of to-day.

The real triumph of naturalism in the theater is the contribution of Germany through the person of Gerhart Hauptmann. In literature, he passed under the influence of Ibsen, of Zola, and of Tolstoy. That little book of sketches, with its startlingly naturalistic treatment, the *Papa Hamlet* of Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf, confessedly written under the influence of Zola's theories and practice, impressed Hauptmann as a model of naturalistic treatment. The powerful example of *Ghosts*, the only drama of Ibsen's which may be termed naturalistic in its treatment, exerted a tremendous influence likewise upon the young Hauptmann. It was a most fortunate conjunction—the development of the naturalistic

talent of Hauptmann strictly contemporaneous with the rise of the free theaters in Germany. The example of Antoine in Paris awoke the ambition of young Germany to emulate his example, to free dramatic art from the oppression of a despotic bureaucracy on the one hand, from the shackles of a rigid and adamantine conventionality on the other.

The opening of the Free Theater (*Freie Bühne*) in Berlin in the autumn of 1889 (September 27) marks the birth of the new dramatic movement in Germany. The gates to the modern German drama were thrown open by the production of *Ghosts*, as Dr. Otto Brahm expressed it; and during the next few years this same play sounded the tocsin of the new time in England and America. It was the opening production of the Independent Theater of London in 1891; and upon its first production in New York in 1894, the performance was described by the realistic novelist, William Dean Howells, as "the very greatest theatrical event he had ever known." The production of Hauptmann's maiden dramatic work, *Before Sunrise*, in 1889, was a significant event in the history of the modern German drama. During the same season were produced Björnson's *A Gauntlet*, Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness*, *Die Familie Selicke* of Holz and Schlaf, a sprawling chronicle in the extravagantly naturalistic manner,

and Hauptmann's second play, *The Coming of Peace* (*Das Friedensfest*). The storm of discussion aroused by Hauptmann's two plays, and the contradictory opinions thereby evoked, gave powerful impetus to the free theater movement. The second season, with its five performances, was noteworthy for the production of a new drama by Hauptmann, *Lonely Lives* (*Einsame Menschen*, 1881); and with a single performance of Strindberg's *Miss Julia*, in its third season, the *Freie Bühne* ceased to exist. For it had fulfilled its function, accomplished the needed pioneering work, and paved the way for Gerhart Hauptmann and his successors.

The new form of drama created by Gerhart Hauptmann we shall denominate the *drama of pure naturalism*. In such dramas, the subjects are invariably chosen from contemporary life; and, because of the sharp contrasts and new materials afforded, from those phases of life which had hitherto been rigorously excluded from the domain of the drama—the life of the humble and the lowly. The subjects treated were repulsive to many theater-goers, accustomed to the universal idealization of life in the conventional theater. The ugly, the abnormal, the asymmetric were types enthusiastically studied by the naturalists. Their search was not for beauty, for the ideal, or for the moral; their search was only

for the truth in the light of modern social relativity. A graphic and faithful projection of a section of human actuality—that, in fine, was the ideal of the naturalist.

As a new form, the drama of pure naturalism affords in its origin a striking example of that "evolution by explosion" in the mutation theory of the scientist, De Vries. The naturalistic drama arose in Germany, not as the result and culmination of a series of insensible gradations in the form of the German drama. In the mutation theory of De Vries, a species sometimes arises which exhibits no transitional stages of preparation; the addition of a new unit to the group of units which determine the character of a species results in the creation of a new form sharply differentiated as an individual species from the one out of which it has been produced. This phenomenon is exemplified in the origin of the literary species denominated the drama of pure naturalism. Out of the scientific doctrine of evolution, and not out of the drama of the past, Hauptmann selected that unit idea which, projected into the group of units which determines the character of the conventional drama, eventuated in the creation of the newer dramatic form, the drama of pure naturalism. This new unit was none other than the cardinal tenet of the doctrine of evolution: social determinism. In the

drama of the Greeks, tragedy was the result of an inscrutable Fate, the immutable will of the Gods. In the drama of Marlowe and Shakespeare, tragedy was the outcome of individual character. The individual was regarded as the molder of his own destiny; he was thus held to strict moral account for his actions. This tragedy, which has been termed the drama of psychological individualization, was essentially moral in its tone; destiny became identified with human character and the human will.

An eager student of the newer scientific theories in their relation to the laws of human behavior and the phenomena of human society, Hauptmann soon became a convert to the doctrine of social determinism. Freedom of will was seen to be a delusion in the face of the overpowering influences of environment and inherited characteristics. The simple conception of individual responsibility gave place to the vaster and more complicated conception of man as a creature subject to the fixed laws of social and biological heredity. In this conception, man is derivative, not creative. The individual hero vanishes forever from the scene; and the characters of the drama are the resultants of social and biological influences for which they are not individually responsible. Unity of action, the indispensable criterion of the earlier drama, gives place to the faithful reproduction of scenes

which follow each other in strict chronological, rather than psychological, succession. Tragic guilt ceases to obtain: we are devoured less with a sense of individual tragedy than with a sentiment of social pity. The egoistic appeal of the individual character tragedy is supplanted by the altruistic appeal of a social catastrophe arising from the maladjustments, imperfections, and injustices of social organization.

It cannot be denied that the naturalists have produced powerful and gripping dramas, more appalling through the squalor of the scenes and happenings than elevating through the beauty of the story. Assuredly, the remorselessness of the treatment, combined with the repulsiveness of the characters involved, have given rise to the not unnatural, but unwarranted, critical commonplace that the naturalist wishes to shock and horrify his audience with his drab pictures of poverty, misery, criminality, and degeneracy. From the philosophic standpoint, the naturalist is intent upon exhibiting, in the most effective way, the influences of environment and heredity upon human character and action. In consequence, he chooses his subjects and scenes from those classes of society which exhibit the operation of these forces in the most striking way. Indeed, the citizens of the fourth estate, the petty artisans, the humbler peasantry, the submerged tenth in the

cosmopolitan centers, crooks, tramps, thugs, criminals—in these lower forms of humanity, character is least volitional and creative. In such social strata are most glaringly patent the tragic consequences of hereditary ills and proclivities, the direful influences of surroundings calculated to retard and arrest all intellectual and spiritual development. When the naturalist chooses his subjects from the ordinary ranks of human life, the self-imposed restriction of moral detachment, of absolute impassibility, forces him to select for his subjects, in illustration of the working of scientific forces, individuals descending in the character scale—abnormal, aberrant, distorted types, diseased stocks, moral perverts, degenerates, human symptoms of a decadent civilization. Of the first class, one might mention that succession of kinematographic pictures of a social hell's kitchen, Gorky's *The Lower Depths;* that terribly repulsive picture of sexual degeneracy, Zola's *Nana;* that grim denotement of the moral degradation of the Russian peasantry, Tolstoy's *The Powers of Darkness;* the dramatic panorama of a peasant's strike, presided over by the grim figures of Hunger and Want, Hauptmann's *Die Weber;* that fevered dream of universal anarchy, Andreyev's *Savva.* Of the second class, conspicuous examples are such presentments of the tragic consequences upon the younger generation of evil

living of the older, as Ibsen's *Ghosts*, Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, Strindberg's *Miss Julia;* such illustrations of the pathetic results of human disparities and imperfections in environmental influence as Hauptmann's *Einsame Menschen*, Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Brieux's *Blanchette;* such exemplifications of abnormalities in character and temperament, due to heredity and environmental influences, as Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, Strindberg's *The Creditors*, Brieux's *Maternité*, D'Annunzio's *La Citta Morte*.

The day of the *drama of pure naturalism*, I dare say, is past. The temper of the age, with its altruistic sentiments and social sense, alone would suffice to reject the drama which posits impassibility as one of its cardinal principles. Indeed, the further development of naturalism was effectively checked when the very founders of naturalism deserted the temple they had reared. Hauptmann, with a versatility unmatched by any contemporary dramatist, soon revealed himself in many guises wholly unfamiliar, and indeed antipodal, to naturalism. While Ibsen's dramas are founded upon modern theories of science and psychology, his characters are volitional, and they concern themselves fundamentally with problems of psychology and morality. Indeed, almost all of his later dramas, symbolic in treatment and enveloped in certain mystical ideas, are far re-

moved from naturalism. Strindberg left the field of pure naturalism to soar into the blue of mysticism, of allegory, of romance.

First, as indicated, the changed temper of the age and the defection of the naturalists themselves checked the advance of the principles of naturalism. Second, the drama in the main deals with conflict, struggle, and the clashes arising from the development of character and growth of soul. The naturalistic drama, constituted of characters purely static, shown in scenes chronologically successive, failed to furnish the indispensable appeal of human interest. The force of the naturalistic influence, it cannot be too strongly asserted, however, has been the greatest influence in the development and creation of the contemporary drama of the cosmopolitan type. The effects of naturalism, under the less forbidding term of realism, its legitimate offspring, are the most conspicuous effects which the drama of to-day, wherever it may be found, has to exhibit. In all the exterior details of stage-setting, in a certain poverty of *mise-en-scène*, in the lack of extraneous and extrinsic embellishment, the contemporary drama exhibits overwhelming naturalistic influence. The selection of subjects from modern life, the employment of the vernacular in conversation and the presentment, with the minimum of convention, of a highly nat-

ural picture of real life—these requirements, now accepted by the dramatic craftsman as indispensable requirements of his art, are the immediate consequences of the principle and practice of naturalism. Even more profound has been the influence of naturalism upon the treatment of human character; for the contemporary dramatist must be better and more accurately informed, than was the dramatist ever before in history, upon the modern scientific theories of hypnotism, auto-suggestion, psychotheraphy, psychopathy, heredity, environment, all the newer principles of biology and psychology.

Naturalism furnished the model of the drama purely static. For there is virtually no room for the dynamic display of volitional activity in a drama without psychological development and lacking in the hero and heroine of the ancient dramatic formula. This naturalistic type of drama lent itself not to long productions in five acts in the larger theaters, but to plays of a few scenes, sometimes of only a single act—pictures, tableaux, atmospheric in tone with a minimum of action—shown in a theater of very limited size. This is the "intimate theater" of to-day. The *Théâtre Libre* first gave Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, —a dramatized version of a novel, it is true, but in its form distinctly creative; and soon afterward produced Strindberg's *Miss Julia*. At the

Théâtre de L'Œuvre, of Lugné Poë, were produced Strindberg's *The Father* and *Creditors* as conspicuous specimens in the new manner adapted to the stage of the intimate theater; and the development proceeded rapidly in Berlin, first fostered by the *Freie Bühne* and developed gradually by the genius of Reinhardt. The earlier ideas, which prevailed about the drama and the theater as its temple, were blown away by the fierce blasts of the new idea. Under the older conception, a drama must be five acts long, with no changes within the acts; each act must be scenic in character; the end of the act must be a "curtain"—i.e. a situation designed to evoke the applause of the audience. The hero and heroine were rôles especially designed for "stars." The conventions of dramaturgy in a large theater were destructive of vocal illusion: the straining of the voice, in order to be heard to the farthest confines of the theater, the oratorical and formal cast imparted to speeches given in a voice raised to a much higher pitch than that employed in real life, the absurdity of being forced to whisper low enough to be heard two hundred and fifty feet away, etc. The intimate theater must be small enough to enable the player to speak with entire naturalness but without straining the voice. This close contact with the audience, achieving the intimacy of naturalness and reality, resulted

in the abolition of star-parts, "curtains," soliloquys, mere effects. When Reinhardt opened his *Kammerspielhaus*, the very title of the little theater expressed its function: to carry over into drama the idea of "chamber music." The drama adapted to the intimate theater can be neither sprawling, "theatrical," nor long-winded. To employ the words of Strindberg, it must be brief, significant, creative. "No definite form should control the dramatist, since the motive alone determines the form. Freedom in treatment is all—conditioned only by unity and the sense of style in conception."

The static drama, of the new type, is thus seen to be the product of naturalism and a functional dramatic adaption to the intimate theater. Two new species of this form have come into being within the last few decades, the one in comedy, the other in tragedy. Each is a drama of quiescent action, of depressed volition. Each attains its purpose: the one through purely intellectual, the other through purely atmospheric means. The one may roughly be described as a dramatized debate, the other as a dramatized short-story. The first form I shall denominate the *drama of discussion;* the second form, the *drama of suggestion.*

The drama of discussion, under a critical analysis, would appear to have its origin, if not

its precise exemplification, in the dramatic theories of Ibsen. In his drama of recessive action, which finds its classic model in the *Œdipus Rex*, of Sophocles, Ibsen foreshortened and compressed the action into a climax or catastrophe. Hebbel before him had unearthed the germ of the drama of explication in the discovery that action and exposition must be identified. Since only the concluding phases, the climax or catastrophe of a cumulative series of events, were to be presented, the dramatic craftsman was compelled to dramatize the exposition. That is to say, the characters were obliged to reveal in discussion, in exchange of confidences, in revealing hints and accusatory implications, the incidents and events which preceded and gave rise to the situations exhibited within the confines of the drama itself. *A Doll's House*, for example, is an excellent illustration of the French model of a well-made play —down to a certain point. When Nora suddenly says to Torvald: "In all these eight years—longer than that—from the very beginning of our acquaintance, we have never exchanged a word on any serious subject," and sits down to discuss *in extenso* the situation with him, we realize that Ibsen has broken sharply with the old form and found the germ of the new. It was this revolutionary change—this elaborate, revelatory discussion with its dramatic climax—which so startled

Francisque Sarcey that he threw up his hands, declaring that he understood nothing of the author's purpose and intent. *An Enemy of the People* is a more concise example of the drama of explication; Dr. Stockmann's most conclusive action is a speech, which consumes almost an entire act. More conspicuous still is *Little Eyolf*, which, save for the death of little Eyolf, the event giving the impulse to the play, is almost entirely devoted to discussion—a mordantly incisive revelation, through exchange of ideas, of two people's views of life and of the gradual re-alignment and common agreement as to the future. This play may be described as the dramatization of certain intellectual and emotional states. The social dramas of Ibsen are all dramas of awakening. And this awakening results less from overt actions of the characters than from the train of ideas set up in the minds of the characters by some particular complication or conjunction.

The contemporary drama has been essentially explicative in character, concerning itself less with the actions themselves than with the psychological motives which give rise to such actions or the development of character in consequence of such actions. Action has lost its predominant vitality as an end in itself: it serves rather as a point of approach or a point of departure. Such plays as *The Cherry Orchard* of Tchekhov, *The Cred-*

itors of Strindberg, *A Gauntlet* of Björnson, Moody's *The Great Divide*, Schnitzler's *Das Vermächtniss*, Bergström's *Lynggard and Company* may be instanced as adequate forms of the drama of explication.

The extension, or rather the amplification, of the germ idea of Ibsen has been the technical contribution of Shaw and Brieux. According to Shaw's narrow but precise conception of the dramas of Ibsen, they exhibit the conflict of the older with the newer ideals. It is significant that even in his most explicative dramas, Ibsen never permits his characters to discuss ideas of life save as a means of exhibiting an indispensable phase of character or forwarding the dramatic movement of the piece. On the other hand, Shaw has conceived and executed a number of dramas not only singularly devoid of action, but also singularly replete with discussion. In witnessing *Don Juan in Hell*, from *Man and Superman*, given as an unit at the Royal Court Theater in London, I felt that the type had been pushed to the verge of its possibilities. One could not fail to recognize that the beautiful costumes designed by Charles Ricketts, the " conducting " of Shaw, the amazing glibness of Robert Loraine and Norman McKinnel were all-powerful, almost indispensable, auxiliaries. With Shaw, the discussion obscures the action and often becomes merely an end, not

a means. With Ibsen, the discussion, the conversational explication, is itself drama; with Shaw, the discussions are often merely displays of intellectual virtuosity, decorative dialectics. Shaw prides himself as much on being a moralist and a debater as on being a dramatist. And in the light of such a view, he has the hardihood to proclaim that "an interesting play cannot in the nature of things mean anything but a play in which problems of conduct and character of personal importance to the audience are raised and suggestively discussed." Shaw has written notable plays, authentic dramas according to Aristotelian standards, in which discussion displays a large part—*Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Candida*, *Man and Superman*, *Fanny's First Play*. He has written others which do not accord with Aristotelian standards—having no beginning, middle, or end, in the technical sense; revealing no authentic conflict of wills; almost totally lacking in action. *Getting Married* and *Misalliance* are perhaps the best examples. These the critics gleefully pronounce to be "not plays"—and condemn as the witty vagaries of a skilled dialectician. In the *Induction* to *Fanny's First Play*, Shaw elucidates this critical attitude through the mouth of "Trotter," in whom he has lampooned Mr. Walkley, of the *Times:*

"I am aware that one author, who is, I blush to say, a personal friend of mine, resorts freely to the dastardly subterfuge of calling them conversations, discussions, and so forth, with the express object of evading criticism. But I'm not to be disarmed by such tricks. I say they are not plays. Dialogues, if you will. Exhibitions of character, perhaps: especially the character of the author. Fictions, possibly, though a little decent reticence as to introducing actual persons, and thus violating the sanctity of private life, might not be amiss. But plays, no. I say NO."

Criticism, as already indicated, must radically reverse its definitions of drama and the dramatic to make room for the new drama of discussion. Remarkable examples of this form constitute perhaps the most notable work which has been done by the younger British dramatists. Galworthy's most successful drama, *Strife*, is a drama of discussion. Barker's *The Voysey Inheritance* and *The Madras House*, with quite prosaic settings and a minimum of action, are essentially disquisitions, discussions in the form of a stage play. One of the most remarkable plays recently written is Schnitzler's *Professor Bernardhi*, a play consisting of a discussion, by a large number of characters, of a single episode, innocent enough in itself yet almost endless in its religious and social ramifications. The most effective work of the strikingly talented St. John Hankin, though he aped the conversational brilliancy of Wilde, follows the lines of the drama of discussion. Wilde

himself, a past master in the art of writing witty dialogue, did not produce the true drama of discussion—being singularly inept as a social philosopher and incapable, as dramaturgist, of doing more than carrying on the tradition of Congreve and Sheridan.

The second variant of the type of static drama is the form created by Maeterlinck in his earlier no-plot dramas. This form, in an essay published a good many years ago, I have chosen to entitle *the drama of suggestion.* There are two characteristic features of Maeterlinck's work: the dominance of fatality and the stylicized manner. Maeterlinck harks back to the ancient idea of fatality, so familiar to the Greeks; and conceives of a God, after the fashion of Jupiter perhaps, essentially cruel and malign in disposition. With a sense for character but slightly developed, he has drawn a group of characters which are deficient in individuality, volition, or even morality. They are pitiable, primitive creatures, children of the youth of the world—stumbling blindly into the snares and gins of fate, fleeing dementedly from the wrath to come. The primitive naïveté, the juvenility of the characters, is accentuated by the employment of a certain peculiar style, which creates and emanates the desired atmosphere. The dialogue is broken, halting, stammering, repetitive, recitative—suggestive at once of

the volitional fatuity, the mental vacuity of the characters. The real secret of the distinction of such dialogue is its suggestiveness. We are conscious that conversation is but a superficial manifestation, which veils depths of consciousness—language sufficing to conceal both thought and feeling. Furthermore, Maeterlinck accomplishes the difficult feat—a feat which Thomas Hardy achieves so masterfully in his Wessex fiction—of inducing the consciousness that there is a secret connection, intercommunication—must I say *rapport*—between Nature and humanity. As in the ancient Hebrew days, the later Roman time, so with Maeterlinck men look to Heaven for a sign—and when it manifests itself, they heed it with superstitious reverence.

These earlier dramas of Maeterlinck, which were overloaded with symbolic paraphernalia and often too heavily freighted with mysticism, exactly express a certain definite aspect of contemporary art. This form of drama again illustrates in literary evolution the operation of the mutation theories of De Vries. A new species of drama comes into being, deriving many elements from the past but not exhibiting a gradual evolution from preceding forms through a series of successive gradations. Into the group of units constituting the species known as the Greek drama of fatality, Maeterlinck projected a new unit idea

from a new art—the art of the short-story. This unit idea was the contribution of Edgar Allan Poe—the idea of suggestion, the indirect creation of illusion. *Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque*—in the very title lies a clue to Poe's artistic formula. In poem as well as in short-story, in *The Raven* as well as in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Poe successfully evokes a shiver —through his exotic, stylicized form and his suggestion of the immanence of mysterious, malign forces within and without us, lurking there to work upon us their devious will. Spielhagen has maintained that Poe was dominated by a single theory of criticism; and that he attributed to the drama, the epic, and the short-story the peculiar characteristics of lyric poetry. Yet Poe was but anticipating the theory of the modern one-act play—the form which Strindberg believed to be the dramatic form of the future—when he said, in speaking of the short-story or prose tale: "if wise, he (the artist) has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived with deliberate care a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events—as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there

should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design."

As I pointed out some years ago, Maeterlinck's plays of suggestion follow precisely the lines of the short-story, being characterized by original and ingenious artistic effects, more than often fantastic and exotic, and above all convergent, intensive, cumulative, as a means of inducing the sense of unity, of totality. "The artistic kinship of Maeterlinck with Poe and Maupassant," to quote my own words, "becomes all the more patent when we recognize Maeterlinck's no-plot plays not only as occult studies in hallucination, but as dramatic versions of the perfected art form of the masters of the short-story." Dr. C. Alphonso Smith has pointed out that the "practical scientific strain" in Poe's work warrants us in describing him as "the greatest constructive force in American literature." I have often felt that America's first great conquest in the domain of the drama was destined to be, because of her contributions to world literature in the technic and form of the short-story, a mastery of the technic and form of the one-act play.

The drama of suggestion, it need scarcely be pointed out, is not the work of Maeterlinck alone. The peculiar constitution of his philosophy and temperament tends to fix association of the form

with his name. The " dialogue of secondary intention," as defined by Maeterlinck, is found in Shakespeare and Ibsen. *Hamlet* and *The Master-Builder* are assuredly dramas of suggestion; so also are Hauptmann's *Hannele,* Strindberg's *There are Crimes and Crimes* and *Easter,* Björnson's *Beyond Human Power,* Wilde's *Salomé,* Kennedy's *The Servant in the House.* As far as quiescence of action in the drama is concerned, that is a part of the heritage of modern enlightenment. " For, in truth," says Maeterlinck, " the further we penetrate into the consciousness of man, the less struggle do we discover. . . . A consciousness that is truly enlightened will possess passions and desires infinitely less exacting, infinitely more peaceful and patient, more salutary, abstract and general, than are those that reside in the ordinary consciousness."

In an age of universal experimentation, the golden age of science and invention, we may look confidently forward in expectation of the early emergence of many new forms of the drama. We are beginning to be confronted with a profusion of novel experiments—the gigantesque photo-drama, *Cabiria,* of D'Annunzio; the neo-classicist poster pantomime of Reinhardt, *Sumurûn;* vast pageants, such as those I have witnessed at London and Oxford, or the more recent Masque of St. Louis in this country; productions of the

classics and the Elizabethans in the new impressionist manner; the renascence of the open-air theater; toy theaters; plays for marionettes, etc. Dramatic activity, stimulated here and there, often produces novelties in the treatment of local situation; and from time to time "movements" are heralded with many flourishes. The strangeness of Heijermans' *The Good Hope*, an impressionistic study of the sea, almost deceives us into thinking that he has achieved a new form; certainly there is novelty in the tendency, so noticeable in Maeterlinck, for example, for making Nature the protagonist in drama. So faithful to artistic truth is the work of John Millington Synge that we feel as if, upon the soil of Ireland, the day of dramatic art has dawned with a fresh, rich splendor. His drama, novel in its elemental reversion to the type of dramatic art at the beginning of history, bears out, in great measure, the promise to afford that nourishment upon which live the imaginations of men. We sense profound prophecy in his memorable words: "On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy; and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, and people have grown sick of the false joy of the musical comedy, that has been given them in place of the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality."

Dramatic forms, imparting a semblance of nov-

elty by reason of purely allegorical or epical qualities, testify to the modern tendency toward experimentation. Strindberg's colossal trilogy, *To Damascus*, is an amorphous dramatic autobiography; yet it sounds the universal note. In his remarkable dramatic allegory, *The Life of Man*, Andreyev stands at the opposite pole from the Goethe of *Faust*, the Ibsen of *Peer Gynt;* he has here achieved the quintessence of artistic abstraction. The *Everywoman* of Browne, with its cheap and tawdry effects, nevertheless so caught a certain tone of universality, the sense which makes the whole world kin, as to touch the heart of millions. We await from Maeterlinck the supreme allegorical drama of our time. Symbolic romance, extensive, vast, bids fair to express best the artistic sense of the coming century.

VI

THE BATTLE WITH ILLUSIONS.—THE ANCIENT BONDAGE AND THE NEW FREEDOM

"We wish to know the reason why we have made up our mind, and we find that we have decided without any reason, and perhaps even against every reason. But, in certain cases, that is the best of reasons. For the action which has been performed does not then express some superficial idea, almost external to ourselves, distinct and easy to account for: it agrees with the whole of our most intimate feelings, thoughts and aspirations, with that particular conception of life which is the equivalent of all our past experience, in a word, with our personal idea of happiness and of honor. Hence it has been a mistake to look for examples in the ordinary and even indifferent circumstances of life in order to prove that man is capable of choosing without a motive. It might easily be shown that these insignificant actions are bound up with some determining reason. It is at the great and solemn crisis, decisive of our reputation with others, and yet more with ourselves, that we choose in defiance of what is conventionally called a motive, and this absence of any tangible reason is the more striking the deeper our freedom goes."—HENRI BERGSON.

THE drama is a living art form. One may question, therefore, whether it will ever be possible to devise for it categories wholly valid, universally comprehensive, since the drama, as a life form, is subject to the law of evolution. It is a significant illustration of the evolution which is crea-

tive as well as progressive, continually enlarging its scope, broadening its domain, through the pressure of the human factor, in this instance the vital urge. Writing to Heinrich Laube in 1880, Ibsen said: "Do you really attach much value to categories? I, for my part, believe that the dramatic categories are elastic, and that they must accommodate themselves to the literary facts —not *vice versa*." And again, four years later, in a letter to Theodore Caspari, Ibsen remarked: "I gave up universal standards long ago, because I ceased believing in the justice of applying them." In these observations, Ibsen struck a blow for freedom in the domain of dramatic art. Dramatic criticism, forever seeking to formulate comprehensive categories within which to embrace the entire field of dramatic representation, exercises a repressive influence upon the creative genius. One of the most striking facts in the modern dramatic movement is the constructive demonstration of many contemporary dramatic craftsmen that a play may be eminently successful in stage representation, judged by both artistic and commercial standards, and yet be intrinsically "undramatic" when judged by the confining definitions and traditional tenets of dramatic criticism. A continually recurring phenomenon nowadays is the play which attains popular success on the stage, though condemned by the dramatic

critic as not *du théâtre,* not a drama. The time is ripe for the exhibition of creative criticism as applied to the new forms and the display of a more catholic spirit in judging the original, experimental art work of to-day.

One can illustrate sharply the difference between ancient and modern practice by a comparison of the ideas of Aristotle with the ideas of Hauptmann in regard to the drama. Such a comparison will serve to clarify and elucidate, in some measure, the most significant terms employed in dramatic criticism: character, action, and drama. In one of the most famous passages in all dramatic criticism, Aristotle says: "Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life. . . . Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character; character comes in as subsidiary to the action. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character. . . . The plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy; character holds the second place." Viewed from any standpoint, whether from that of Aristotle alone or from that of the dramatic critic of to-day, the dictum is so gross and exaggerated a distortion of the truth as to be a virtual falsity. The object of the drama, in

Aristotle's view, is to exhibit character in action; and the two constituent elements of the drama are, therefore, character and action. Is it possible, then, for the dramatist to utilize either to the exclusion of the other? In other words, Aristotle is seeking the indispensable requirement, the absolute *differentia* or distinguishing characteristic, of the literary species known as the drama. Of the two, he chooses "plot" as the "first principle" of the drama; and he clearly implies the definition that action means "the incidents and the plot." Since Aristotle's day, action has come to mean something vastly deeper and more comprehensive than merely "the incidents and the plot." It appears to be a perfectly true, but perfectly trivial, dictum that a fable is indispensable to the drama. It is a deliberate perversion of the facts to maintain that this fable is synonymous with action. By the same token, a fable is equally indispensable for the novel and the short-story. Yet, in the light of modern dramaturgic practice, even the fable is not an indispensable ingredient of the drama. The drama may exist without a plot; and the contemporary naturalist has again and again demonstrated this dictum by taking down the fourth wall of a room and exhibiting a static picture of human life. Such a play is not a play in the sense understood by Aristotle; it is not essentially narrative, but essentially pic-

torial and atmospheric, in its nature. The drama need not embody a story of human experience; it need only be a picture of human existence, real or imagined. In the choice of the dramatist, sublimated by his art, this picture may be so typical, so representative, as in itself to constitute a criticism of life, a judgment of society, or an ideal striving of the human soul.

It has been pointed out that Aristotle is guilty of real confusion in thought in identifying the story with "the incidents and the plot." If Aristotle really meant, as he says, that "without action there cannot be a tragedy," again is he refuted by the practice of contemporary dramatic art. Here we are confronted with the fundamental principle, indeed the very definition, of the drama; and of necessity we must strive anew to arrive at some adequate comprehension of the term action. Through the intermediary of Spitta in his *Die Ratten,* Hauptmann denies the importance of action in the drama and asserts it to be "a worthless accident, a sop for the groundlings!" Certainly, action in the sense of physical deeds is no longer the obligatory attribute of the drama. Speaking in his own person, Hauptmann has said: "Action upon the stage will, I think, give way to the analysis of character and to the exhaustive consideration of the motives which prompt men to action. Passion does not move at such headlong

speed as in Shakespeare's day, so that we present not the actions themselves, but the psychological states which cause them." Up to the time of our modern era, the inevitable conclusion, the artistic *finale* of tragedy, was death. To-day, the violent is the exceptional moment of life; and a deeper tragedy than dying may be the tragedy of living. Great dramas surely will be written, notable dramas have already been written, in which passive acceptance and not active resistance is the distinguishing characteristic. Action, says Gilbert in Wilde's *Intentions*, is limited and relative. "But we who are born at the close of this wonderful age are at once too cultivated and too critical, too intellectually subtle and too curious of exquisite pleasures, to accept any speculations about life in exchange for life itself." Wilde here but expresses the conventional idea that the life of action is infinitely preferable to the life of contemplation. Certain modern critics have even gone so far as to say that Aristotle, in positing action as the indispensable criterion of the drama, was only anticipating Ferdinand Brunetière in defining the drama as the struggle of the human will against obstacles.

The essential feature of the dramatic species, says Brunetière, is the exhibition of the opposition between the world without and the world within, the objective and the subjective. Struggle

is its essential element. With Aristotle, the word action has an implicit material connotation; but Brunetière employs the word conflict, which is as applicable to the realms of the mental, the moral, the ethical, and the spiritual, as to the material and the physical. The one and indispensable criterion for the drama, according to Brunetière, is that it shall portray a clash of contending desires, a stark assertion of the human will, against strenuous opposition, for the attainment of its end. "There can be no tragedy without a struggle," he says; "and there can be no genuine emotion for the spectators unless something other and greater than life is at stake." It is not life alone, then, the material issue, but a spiritual issue—something other and greater than life—which is the stake of tragedy: character, honor, loyalty, integrity, fidelity, freedom, justice. To quote Brunetière once more, to make his position abundantly clear, "Drama is a representation of the will of man in conflict with the mysterious powers or natural forces which limit or belittle us; it is one of us thrown living upon the stage, there to struggle against fatality, against social law, against one of his fellow-mortals, against himself, if need be, against the ambitions, the interests, the prejudices, the folly, the malevolence of those who surround him."

Life thrusts before us at every turn a series of

decisions that must be made, of alternatives that must be chosen. The problems of duty and desire eternally clamor for solution—the problems of predestination and freedom, of will and inclination, of passion and self-restraint. The two fundamentals which Brunetière posits as indispensable criteria for the dramatic species are will and struggle. A very brief consideration will suffice to demonstrate that these so-called differentiating characteristics of the dramatic species are striking characteristics of other forms of literary art. The short-story is an art form which has been developed to a high state of excellence during the contemporary period. Intensive, cumulative force is a distinguishing characteristic; unity of impression is a prime requisite. All the lines must converge to a predestined end or culmination. Some of the most finished specimens of the form exhibit the human will in struggle, or a clash of contending desires. Even the lower forms, such as the detective story, concretize a struggle of the intensest sort. The will of a Dupin, expressed in the most cultivated forms of detective imagination, of the faculties of analysis and deduction, struggles to overcome the obstacles presented by a series of mysterious, apparently inexplicable, facts. Sherlock Holmes is less a personality than a volitional intelligence, directing the searchlight of imagination and deduction

in the effort to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. To acknowledge that such stories are essentially dramatic is begging the question. By the logic of Brunetière's hypothesis, we are driven to the manifestly false conclusion that they *are* dramas. We may assume that such stories, in competent hands, are subjects for dramatization. But such an hypothesis is clearly irrelevant to the question before us.

The suggestion has recently been advanced that crisis, rather than conflict, is the essence of drama. A crisis is a turning point in the progress of a series of events, a culmination. Assuredly this is a concomitant attribute of the dramas falling under Brunetière's definition. Such dramas, indeed, exhibit or constitute a series of events, of physical or psychological import, marked by the display of wills in action. Crisis, to be sure, is one phase, the culminant phase, of the struggle of wills; indeed, such a struggle will generally exhibit a chain or succession of crises. It must also be conceded that this new criterion, though shallower in content, is more comprehensive than the criterion of Brunetière. Consider the static dramas of Maeterlinck in his earlier period, which are indubitably short-stories cast in the dramatic form. A play such as *L'Intruse*, exhibiting no struggle of wills, is clearly not a "drama," according to Brunetière. Yet under the new cri-

terion, it is distinctively a drama: an intensive representation of a crisis. In order to create the desired illusion, the author makes every word, every slightest stir of nature, cumulative in its effect. It is a little drama of cumulative dread. This new theory has, however, no thoroughly solid foundation. For its propounder has left undefined the essential element, crisis; or rather, he committed the amateurish blunder of defining it in terms of itself. The quintessential characteristic of drama, says Mr. Archer, is crisis; but he further insists that, since all crises are not dramatic, we must admit within our category only the dramatic crises! In other words, the essence of drama is the crucial crisis; or to put it the other way round, crisis is the essence of the dramatic drama. Which is absurd.

It may be further urged against the criteria of both conflict and crisis that many great novels exhibit the stark assertion of the human will struggling against obstacles through a series of progressive, interlinking crises. Furthermore, one need only turn to the fertile and original dramas of our time in order to discover satisfactory examples of the successful stage play which fall outside the categories of both conflict and crisis; and a backward glance will disclose not a few plays of high rank, the work of men of different times and differing nationalities, ex-

cluded from these categories. Of plays of the moderns, falling without the category of conflict, may be cited, for example, Schnitzler's *Lebendige Stunden*, Maeterlinck's *Les Aveugles*, *Les Sept Princesses*, *L'Intérieure*, and *L'Intruse*, Gorky's *Nachtasyl*, Hauptmann's *Hannele*, Strindberg's *Easter*, Elizabeth Baker's *Chains;* an extended list might readily be made from the plays of Æschylus, Sophocles, Goldoni, Calderon, Goethe, Schiller, the Elizabethans, the French classicists, the dramatists of the Restoration. Of modern plays falling without the category of crisis may be mentioned Strindberg's *The Dream Play*, Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken*, Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird*, Barker's *The Madras House*, Galsworthy's *The Pigeon*. It must be clear, from the considerations set forth above, that a new definition of drama is demanded. Such a definition must accord with the facts of modern dramatic practice. It must represent a thoroughly catholic point of view. At the same time it must be recognized, not as final, but only as tentative—subject to future modification, in order to conform to the practice of future way-breakers in dramatic art.

The exhibition of will in conflict with obstacles is assuredly a spectacle perennially attractive and fascinating to the human species. The games and plays of children, the sports of the collegian, the professional contests of football, baseball, tennis,

cricket, lacrosse, the prize fights of America, the bull fights of Spain, the cocking mains of France, the student duels of Germany—all amply testify to man's absorbing interest in a spectacle full of conflict, with the added element of danger. The same tendency is prevailingly manifest in the drama. The plays of most direct and immediate appeal to a popular audience are those which present a naked struggle, with its attendant emotional excitation. Volitional activities in mortal combat are spectacles surcharged with the maximum of emotional excitation. The appeal is to the baser emotions of the crowd, or even of the mob, rather than to the more disciplined and restrained emotions of the enlightened individual. Such hand-to-hand, or rather, will-to-will, conflicts are only moderately frequent in every period of the drama's history. A man like Strindberg frankly says: "I find the joy of life in its violent and cruel struggles"; and Shaw, who has since proved recusant to his avowed principles, outspokenly says: "Unity, however desirable in political agitations, is fatal to drama, since every drama must be the artistic presentation of a conflict. The end may be reconciliation or destruction, or, as in life itself, there may be no end; but the conflict is indispensable: no conflict, no drama." Of modern plays embodying a conflict of wills, one thinks of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*,

Strindberg's *The Father* and *The Dance of Death*, Shaw's *Man and Superman* and *Candida*, Galsworthy's *Strife*, Moody's *The Great Divide*, Jones's *Mrs. Dane's Defense*, Wilde's *Salomé*, Björnson's *A Gauntlet*, Pinero's *The Gay Lord Quex*, Galdos's *Electra*, Schnitzler's *Professor Bernardhi*, as typical illustrations. Plays of this type, exhibiting the conflict of will with will, constitute only a fraction of the dramas successfully presented on a stage in a theater before an audience, in any given historical period. In the vast majority of plays, beyond doubt, there is exhibited an exercise of the human will; but this human will is not necessarily brought into direct conflict with another human will. It may operate in opposition to insurmountable obstacles, such as the fatality of the ancients, the predestination of character, or the dead hand of heredity. Such plays—say *Macbeth*, *Wallenstein*, *Ghosts*—with disastrous ending, are classed as tragedies. Again, the will may be shown in conflict with current moral laws, the rules of society, conventional codes of conduct; and in such cases—Hugo's *Hernani*, Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena*, Dumas's *Fils Naturel*, Brieux's *Les Avariés*, Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*—we have the serious drama, in which the end may or may not be tragic. If the forces are more nearly equalized and the consequences clearly do

not promise disaster, we have comedy, with its various shadings—Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Ibsen's *The League of Youth*, Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. There are, also, the two lower forms of drama in which the characters exist for the sake of the plot, and the incidents are largely adventitious—melodrama, a bastard form of tragedy, and farce, a degenerate form of comedy. In these lower forms, free play is given to surprise, sensation, accident, chance, coincidence; the incidents are often improbable, verging upon the impossible; and the immediate appeal is to the more superficial, vulgar, and easily stimulated emotions.

The point of departure for a new definition of drama—a definition at best suggestive, not final—is the school of contemporary dramatists, including such names as Ibsen, Björnson, Hauptmann, Strindberg, Maeterlinck, Brieux, Shaw, Gorky, Wedekind, Barker, St. John Hankin, Schnitzler, Galsworthy. By their practice, and not through mere theorizing, they have compelled a new rating, a fresh interpretation of action in the drama. Hitherto, action has been universally accepted as an indispensable attribute of drama; and by critics so remote in times and tendency as Aristotle and Maeterlinck. The latter, virtually disavowing the principle of his own static dramas, has said: "Do what one will, discover what mar-

vels one may, the sovereign law of the stage, its essential demand, will always be *action*—there are no words so profound, so noble and admirable, but they will weary us if they leave the situation unchanged, if they lead to no action, bring about no decisive conflict, or hasten no definite solution." The whole trend of contemporary dramatic art has been in the direction of minifying material action and magnifying emotive, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual action. Shaw has employed a suggestive description of the function of the new drama—"illumination of life." The physical actions, the material incidents, of actual life have largely ceased to be ends in themselves: they have become the means to deeper ends, the revelation of character, the exhibition of the underlying motives, passions, impulses, the disclosure of the soul—in a word, the unveiling of the inner life of man. "An event in real life—*and this discovery is quite recent*—," affirms Strindberg, "springs generally from a whole series of more or less deep-lying motives. . . ." One of the speakers in Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* speculatively observes: "Every alteration or crossing of a design, every new-sprung passion, and turn of it, is a part of the action, and much the noblest, except we conceive nothing to be action till the players come to blows." I would remind you once more of Ibsen's declara-

tion that the ability to project experiences *mentally lived through* is the secret of the literature of modern times. And it was assuredly of dramatic literature that he was thinking when he spoke these words. He confessed that he never began the writing of a play until he had his dramatic characters wholly in his power, and knew them down to the "last folds of their souls."

Aristotle said that the drama must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The tendency of the modern drama is to have no beginning, and no middle, and to begin where the earlier drama left off. It is a drama of pure culmination: the unrolling of the scroll of ultimate human character. Nor in a certain sense can it be said to have any end; for the curtain often falls without finality. We are left with a haunting sense of the continuity and endlessness of human life. The contemporary drama, in its higher forms, is an illustration of extreme artistic foreshortening. The modern dramatist strives to penetrate ever deeper into the depths of human consciousness; and in his progress there is the ceaseless exposure of the secret springs of human conduct. The age itself is introspective, self-analytical; we perpetually scrutinize ourselves at arm's length. The popularization and diffusion of scientific theories, the widespread and ever-increasing interest displayed in philosophy, psychology, pathology,

criminology, psychiatry, eugenics; the spread of humanitarian ideas, breeding a spirit of quiescence and peace rather than of resistance and war; increased specialization and refinement of knowledge, imposing the obligation of dispassionate and selfless research—these and similar forces co-operate masterfully in giving tone to the era. Mere acts of violence, deeds of blood, fortuitous conjunctures and collisions are now held to be barbaric, atavistic, characteristic of the child-mind, of the race in the primitive stage. The contemporary feels interest in the cause, not in the details, of suicide, for example. The query is not How? but Why? The ideal of modern heroism is self-control rather than surrender to the promptings of the instincts and the passions. Yet modern life—who would venture to deny it?—for all this tone of quietude, of repression, furnishes joys more uplifting, hopes more ardent, despairs more poignant, tragedies more hopeless, than the past ever cradled in any age.

If it were possible to accept conflict as the *differentia* of the drama, one might define drama as the art of decisions. But it should now be clear that decision, the exercise of will for definite ends, is not an indispensable criterion for the drama. For the drama is the meeting place of all the arts. In pre-eminent degree, it possesses both plastic and pictorial attributes. The easiest, not neces-

sarily the highest, mode of gratifying the curiosity and stimulating the interest of the instinctive spectator is to present action on the stage, action culminating in deeds. A psychologist of the crowd will ingeniously explain this as an evidence of the prevalence of the mob instinct in the theater. The theorizings upon the subject of the psychology of crowds have been carried to such extremes of exaggeration as to obscure in large measure the real purport of the better drama of our day.

The drama is a democratic art, making its appeal to a motley throng assembled for a limited time within a circumscribed area. The wonderful effectiveness of the ancient theater as an instrument of public morality was ascribed by Bacon to the influence of the strange "secret of nature" that men's minds are more open to passions and impressions "congregate than solitary." A solitary spectator witnessing a performance of a great play by capable interpreters will receive certain mental impressions and undergo certain emotional experiences. Reading the text of this same play alone in his study, he will be deprived of many of the impressions and experiences received in the theater—the contributions of the acting, the *mise-en-scène*, and all that goes under the expressive term of stage-effect. The drama is an art of decoration as well as of representation, of appeal

to the eye as well as to the ear, touching the heart as well as affecting the brain. Hence in the theater the visual form of the pictorial, the "argument of the flesh," the appeal of the plastic, are influences superadded to those experienced by the solitary reader of the text of a play. And this no matter how well trained the reader may be in visualizing the sets of the stage, no matter how acute his powers of "stereoscopic imagination."

When the solitary spectator merges into the motley crowd assembled in a theater, a certain phenomenon transpires. There is a tendency toward a change from heterogeneity in idea to homogeneity in sentiment. There is something electric about a crowd—the individual senses a pull of mass receptivity—toward some sort of consensus of opinion and feeling. The drama itself involves a tacit conspiracy between actors and audience—a certain remission of judgment, a certain acceptance of conventions peculiar to the theater. The spectators are seduced into taking sides; their sympathies are engaged for certain characters; their convictions evoked, their emotions appealed to, mayhap their nerves assaulted. Now just as the string of a musical instrument gives forth a certain note in response to the vibrations set up by a nearby tuning fork, so the individual undergoes certain mental and emotional experiences in vibratory response to the

mass-consciousness of the throng. He reacts, negatively, to the electrification of the crowd; and, as Burton suggestively puts it, his private feeling is enforced by the overtones of the others. The spectator loses something of intellectual aloofness in favor of instinctive feeling. As Schlegel says: "The effect produced by seeing a number of others share in the same emotions is astonishingly powerful."

The error of careless disciples of Tarde and Le Bon consists in confusing the passions of the mob with the mental and emotional sentiments of the audience in the theater. There are two vicious generalizations made by these whole-hearted advocates of crowd psychology. The one is that the individual, negatively electrified by the crowd, reverts to the primitive, savage state, and revels in appeals to the lower emotions common to all men whether in the civilized or barbaric state. The second is that the dramatist, since it is his object, in Schlegel's words, to "produce an impression on an assembled crowd, to gain their attention, and to excite in them interest and participation," must be, as the French critic Nisard said, "only the intelligent echo of the crowd."

It is quite true that the dramatist must make his appeal to the species. The man thus addressed is clearly not the primitive man, but the *universal* man. It is quite true that rough-and-tumble

farce, "sympathetic" parts in melodrama, and stage villains all cater to the primitive instincts in man. But these things are found in the primitive types of plays; and the individuals who constitute the audiences do not revert to the primitive state: they are themselves already in a primitive state. The great dramatist appeals, not to commonplace emotions, not to the uncivilized mind, but to the great elemental emotions and to the great sentiments and beliefs which make the whole world kin. Especially anachronistic at the present moment, in face of the great contemporary dramas of our time, is the theory that the modern audience experiences only primitive, inherited emotions. If the greatest achievements of the dramatists from Ibsen down to to-day signify anything, it is that the emotions most worth appealing to in the theater are the higher, and not the commonplace emotions. The recognition has dawned that a drama intellectual in texture, moral in tone, spiritual in appeal, humanitarian in intention, is a powerful popular educative force. The function of such drama is not to pander to commonplace feeling, but to serve as a stimulant and excitant of the higher emotions. The emotions thus appealed to are social, humane, Christian in their nature—the sense of brotherhood, the idea of justice and equality, the sentiment of social solidarity, the passion for social service, the desire for

race improvement, the ideal of social betterment, the common intention to ameliorate conditions of poverty and disease, sympathy for the wronged and the afflicted. The commonplace emotions are not ignored; but they are in no sense paramount in legitimate drama. The great theater for their display is in the lower forms of drama, and the motographic play.

The modern dramatist has successfully shattered the theory that he can be "only the intelligent echo of the crowd." The dramatists of the earlier time were content to follow the laggard snail-pace of the crowd. To find the greatest common denominator of the crowd and then address that "ideal spectator"—this is democracy in art with a vengeance! The dramatists of the newer dispensation are leaders, not mere spokesmen, of the ideas and feelings of the motley throng assembled in the playhouse. They do not exhibit the mere "reversion to type" of the primitive individuals in the audience imagined by the disciples of Le Bon. They have proven themselves to be leaders in thought, exemplars of the higher emotions destined to become the common heritage of the race.

A chasm yawns between the present and the past. The spectator at the drama of the past might thus have voiced his appreciation to the dramatist: "How grateful I am to you for

actually expressing what I have often felt but never put in words!" The spectator at the contemporary drama often feels like saying to the dramatist: "How grateful I am to you for bringing out in me latent, unsuspected funds of thought and emotion! You have given me to think what I might, but never actually, have thought before. You have inspired in me emotions which I might have felt before, but actually never have felt until now." Ibsen wrote for a great cosmopolitan audience—and not, save in a few of the dramas of the middle period, for Norway. Fru Ibsen once told me with the utmost earnestness that her husband regarded Germany, both intellectually and artistically, as his home land. Even the unlikely assumption that he wrote always for the "old folks at home in Norway" only serves to demonstrate how far the great radical dramatist, Ibsen, was ahead of his time. Both for Norway and for Europe, Ibsen was never "only the intelligent echo of the crowd"; he was, in his own words, a *franc-tireur* along the firing line of intellectual advance. And Ibsen is the world's greatest dramatist since Molière.

Indeed, we are coming nowadays to realize that the drama is a great form of thinking, as well as vehicle of emotion. We are coming to realize that to stimulate thought through the medium of the emotions is only a very partial, a very limited

conception of the function of the drama. At no time in the world's history, I dare say, has thought, has philosophy in the larger sense, played so large a part in the drama. Many modern dramatists, themselves incapable of rising to the heights of great and original thinking, have succeeded in reflecting, at lower candle power, some of the great intellectual lights of the century—in this way familiarizing the popular mind with novel ideas, and so leading the way of civilization. Modern dramatic art effectively belies the assertion of Letourneau that the drama "cannot express more than the average of the prevailing opinions, of the ideas current in the surrounding social medium." Intellectual iconoclasts, as well as esthetic revolutionaries, dramatists like Ibsen, Björnson, Hauptmann, Brieux, Shaw have raised and continue to raise whole strata of society to the intellectual and emotional level which they, as chosen and advanced individuals, once enjoyed in more than comparative isolation.

The emotions experienced by a solitary spectator at a play differ in degree, but not in *kind*, from those he would experience in the midst of a crowd in the playhouse. The crowd heightens the intensity of his emotion, but is incapable of changing its nature. We live in an enlightened age; and the audiences for the better dramas of our epoch are, in the vast majority, enlightened indi-

viduals. The simple fact is that these individuals do not relapse atavistically in the theater. The playhouse is not the cradle of "Judge Lynch." The ideas, the opinions cherished by the individual spectator of to-day, are incapable of being warped by the applause or the hisses of the unintelligent. With the tremendous growth of interest in the drama, the publication of plays, the increase in the number and influence of dramatic and theatric organizations, the extension of educational facilities of all kinds, the average spectator at the theater, like the average spectator at the professional ball game, has become a critic "on his own." He is not stampeded by the noise of the theater "fan." He *sits tight* in his own convictions, and retains a clear mind for the formation of his own opinion. Entering the theater to be amused, he is willing to be edified. Ready for a hearty laugh and two hours of enjoyment, he or she—and the percentage of women in modern theater audiences throughout the world is very large—has a brain open enough, a heart big enough, to respond to the larger message of the thought and the conscience of our time.

Hauptmann's *Das Friedensfest* bears upon its title page as motto the following significant passage from Lessing: "They find action in no tragedy, but that in which the lover kneels down, etc. It has never struck them that every internal con-

flict of passions, every sequence of antagonistic thoughts, where one annihilates the other, may also be an action; perhaps they think and feel too mechanically to be conscious of any activity. To refute them seriously were serious labor." The leading contemporary dramatists, Ibsen, Björnson, Hauptmann, Schnitzler, Strindberg, Brieux, Shaw, Galsworthy, in tragedy, tragi-comedy, comedy and even farce, have imported a new kind of action into the drama. In the earlier dramas, there was sometimes an " argument " which, in anticipation, set forth in condensed form the plot of the play. In such dramas, the dialogue, the spoken words, the gestures, served but as commentaries upon the actions of the characters. In the higher dramas of to-day, the play is itself the argument. The exposition is no longer the means of exhibiting the action: it is the action itself. The dialogue is the drama. We see before us individual personalities with strong convictions and definite philosophies of life. The real drama issues from the struggle of these conflicting conceptions of life. When Richard Mansfield considered Shaw's *Candida* for production, only to reject it, he succinctly expressed in a letter to Mr. William Winter (April 10, 1895) the conventional attitude of the past: " There is no change of scene in three acts, and no action beyond moving from a chair to a sofa, and *vice versa*. O, ye Gods and little

fishes!" In illustration of the more modern attitude, one may cite Oscar Wilde, who asserted that he wrote the first act of *A Woman of No Importance* in answer to the complaint of the critics that *Lady Windermere's Fan* was lacking in action. "In the act in question," says Wilde, "there was absolutely no action at all. It was a perfect act."

A well-constructed drama, says Eloesser, is like a lawsuit, in which the parties to the suit are permitted to speak only the essential things. In a sense, a drama of Shaw or Brieux, to employ a French law term, is a dramatic *procès-verbal.* The dramatist presents the characters as right from their several points of view, and resolutely refuses to take sides. The work of a dramatist like Galsworthy often fails to stir the emotions because of this extreme impassibility, this inflexible sense of rectitude and fairness. The newer comedy of our time arises from the unveiling of the motives of character, the ruthless exposure of sentimental, crude, irrational, antiquated, conventional views of life. In this new comedy we observe less a conflict of wills than a clash of ideas. Oscar Wilde once observed that the greatest dramatic effects are produced by a conflict between our artistic sympathies and our moral judgment. Ibsen's whole series of social dramas may be regarded as a series of conflicts between the newer

and the older ideas and ideals. In his Introduction to *The Cenci*, Shelley—who possessed deep insight into the essentials of the dramatic art—shrewdly observes: "It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge, that the *dramatic* character of what she did and suffered consists." An excellent example of the play of conflicting ideas and sentiments, falling outside the contemporary dramatic movement, is *Le Gendre de M. Poirier* of Augier and Sandeau.

The characteristic examples of modern drama exhibit the merciless unmasking of conventional morality, of social hypocrisy, of conspiracies of silence. They are essentially dramas of disillusionment. The process of disillusionment is the drama. The comic dramatist forces his audience to laugh at the victim while he is being disillusionized; the more serious dramatist moves the spectator to pity and terror over the spectacle of the disastrous consequences of acting in blind obedience to views of life which are patently false and illuding. Bernard Shaw has given graphic description of his own comedies in the definition: the function of comedy is nothing less than the destruction of old-established morals. "People

imagine," he observes, "that actions and feelings are dictated by moral systems, by religious systems, by codes of honor and conventions of conduct which lie outside the real human will. Now it is a part of my gift as a dramatist that I know that these conventions do not supply them with their motives. They make very plausible *ex post facto* excuses for their conduct; but the real motives are deep down in the will itself. And so an infinite comedy arises in every-day life from the contrast between the real motives and the alleged artificial motives." The dramatist refuses to be imposed upon, and forces his audience either to laugh consumedly at the imposture, or sympathetically to discern behind the imposture the austere face of tragedy.

That fine French actor, the late Edmond Got, in the first volume of his *Diary*, has tersely expressed the function of the drama, according to conventional standards, in the following passage: "So long as there are opposed interests on the stage, situations that is to say, and these as strong as possible, if it all holds together and is carried out in a more or less logical *crescendo*, you have bagged your game, *l'affaire est dans le sac*." Here we see represented all the classic requirements expressed in colloquial form: the "opposed interests" to furnish the desiderated conflict; the "structural union of the parts" so dogmatically

insisted upon by Aristotle; the "cumulative interest" of the series of events moving toward a crisis; and action which consists of "plot and incidents" so arresting in their nature as to maintain "continuity of interest." It is against the hampering restrictions of these classic requirements that the new school of dramatists, in England and on the Continent, continue to protest, both critically and constructively. Indeed the naturalist, no matter of what nationality, abjures the artificial "preparation" of the French school; displaces plot in favor of a series of graphically noted scenes which, in themselves, constitute a suggestive epitome of a certain phase of human life; and reduces action to its lowest terms by presenting, as a substitute for things done, the clash of mind on mind, the pressure of character against character, or the straining of the soul on the leash of heredity, environment, institutionalism, social determinism. There are no such things as "scenes" in the conventional theatrical sense with Hauptmann in his social dramas, for example; life is continuous and consecutive. In such plays, the interest is not cumulative from act to act: everything is on the same dead level of interest. The incidents are juxtaposed, as in life, rather than interwoven, as in art.

A somewhat different aspect of the new dramaturgy is afforded by the plays of Barker, of

Galsworthy, of Shaw, and the younger school of British playwrights. Impartial, many-sided discussion of a specific problem or a definite situation, devoid of real action save that of powerful cerebration—this is an accurate description of *The Madras House*, of *Getting Married*, of *The Pigeon*. Such a play is not a structural union of organic parts: it is a series of mental films of the same object taken from different angles. The speech of the characters, to employ a happy phrase of Meredith, "rambles concentrically." It is much as if some definite question of human life—marriage, poverty, an immoral inheritance, the relation of the sexes, civic responsibility—were set upon a revolving pedestal; and as it revolves, the many facets of the subject are reflected in the minds of the characters. In the main the unities of time and place are observed; there is unity of impression only in the sense that a single subject is seen in contrariety, caught in the mirrors of sharply delineated mentalities. Such art is not life seen through the prism of the temperament of the artist: it is life, a corner of existence or a phase of social thought, seen through the many temperaments of the artist's dramatic characters. This new species of drama is essentially intellectual in its appeal; it may or may not be propagandist in spirit, depending entirely on the temperament of the individual artist. Shaw and

Brieux represent the extreme propagandist element; Barker occupies the middle ground; whilst Galsworthy and Tchekhov represent the impassibility of consistent realism. Thus Shaw says that "an interesting play cannot in the nature of things, mean anything but a play in which problems of conduct and character of personal importance to the audience are raised and suggestively discussed"; and accordingly "we now have plays, including some of my own, which begin with discussion and end with action, and others in which the discussion interpenetrates the action from beginning to end."

The intellectual rather than the emotive texture of contemporary drama has been accentuated by Hauptmann: "I believe the drama to be the expression of *genuine mental activity*, in a stage of high development. . . . From this aspect there results a series of consequences which enlarge endlessly the range of the drama beyond that of the ruling dramaturgies on all sides, so that nothing that presents itself, either outwardly or inwardly, can be excluded from this *form of thinking*, which has become a *form of art*." In protest against the conception of drama as a conflict of wills and of the dramatist as a "Professor of Energy," Brieux insists that the theater "will be obliged, more and more as time goes on, to devote itself to the study of the great topics

of the day." For his part, Galsworthy denies that it is the function of the artist to work for a practical end. "It is the business of the artist," he reservedly says, "to set down just what he sees and what he feels, to be *negative* rather than positive." At the same time, he acknowledges that "the writer's own temperamental feeling gives the hint of a solution to his readers"; but "the solution is conveyed in flux."

The most conspicuous practitioner on the Continent of the dramaturgy which abjures action and dispenses with the "dramatic" is Tchekhov. In such a play as *The Cherry Garden*, for example, absolutely nothing happens—in the ordinary sense of the term; there is no conflict of wills, the leading characters are deficient in the faculty of volitional decision. Yet in this, as in his other plays, there is an infinitude of psychological action: soul struggles, bankruptcies of will, catastrophes of indecision, tragedies of passivity. Many of Maeterlinck's plays have accustomed us to the character of passive acceptance and the play of quiescence; such plays are adventures of the soul in quest of the unknown. In speaking of Shakespeare, Wilde once said: "It is because he did nothing that he has been able to achieve everything." In a classic passage, Maeterlinck says: "To me, Othello does not appear to live the au-

gust daily life of Hamlet, who has time to live, inasmuch as he does not act."

The guiding principle of the new school, the experimental school, is the intention to show us real life, in its simple, normal, sincere aspects, and at the same time to reveal to us exactly what is transpiring in the minds of characters placed in such circumstances. Real life is not packed full of crises; real life, save at rather rare moments, is not "dramatic." So we hear a man like Barker making his plea for the "normal drama"—"normal plays about and for normal people, capable of normal success under normal conditions." Such a drama must present an undistorted view of life; it must be "a comedy which shall reflect and clarify, honestly and humorously, many aspects of the confused life around us." It is not the "serious drama," or the "advanced drama," or the "intellectual drama" that these men are trying to produce. It is the "sincere drama" which Tchekhov, Hankin, Galsworthy, Barker, Houghton, and their congeners are striving to create: the drama which shall make interesting on the stage the things which interest us in ordinary, every-day life—things trivial enough in themselves, yet in their setting more touching, more moving, more affecting than all the dramatic conjunctures, theatrical episodes, the artificial and far-fetched situations of the theater of commerce. One of the most gifted

exponents in the United States of this sincere drama is Mr. George Middleton. In his one-act plays, the art form which he has achieved with deserved success, he exhibits refreshing sincerity, earnestness, and reserve.

The merely dramatic element in life is coming to be recognized as essentially occasional; its transposition to the stage imparts to it the note of the factitious. It is the human element, the pathos of "little, nameless, unremembered acts," the courage to endure the life that is, the idealism that goes forward in the face of indifference and hostility, the tragi-comedy of all that we are, of all that we fear and hope—this is the material of the new drama. "Sincerity bars out no themes," says Galsworthy in a suggestive passage: "—it only demands that the dramatist's moods and visions should be intense enough to keep him absorbed; that he should have something to say so engrossing to himself that he has no need to stray here and there and gather purple plums to eke out what was intended for an apple tart. Here is the heart of the matter: You cannot get sincere drama out of those who do not see and feel with sufficient fervor; and you cannot get good, sincere drama out of persons with a weakness for short cuts. There are no short cuts to the good in art."

In the light of the contributions of the experi-

mental and pioneering dramatists of the contemporary era, I shall make an effort to formulate a working definition of a play. It is important to note that our vocabulary of dramatic criticism is deficient in the requisite terms for including all the species of plays which find a place on the boards. We have no exact analogue, pithy, and concise, for the German term *Schauspiel.* The *bourgeois* drama is only imperfectly rendered by domestic drama; an even less desirable term is the drama of middle-class life. The very thing we are discussing has itself become suspect. A drama is, from its very derivation, a branch, not of statics, but of kinetics. It really means a doing, an action of some sort, through the intermediary of human beings. Yet we are confronted to-day with a startling contradiction in terms; for, as we have shown, many contemporary dramatists produce theater-pieces which are successfully produced before popular audiences, in which the tone is contemplative and not active. In such plays the stress is thrown upon being to the virtual exclusion of doing. We are driven, finally, to a definition, not of the drama, but of the play.

A play is any presentation of human life by human interpreters on a stage in a theater before a representative audience. The play intrinsically, and its representation by the interpreters, must be so effective, interesting, and moving as to induce

the normal individual in appreciable numbers to make a sacrifice of money and time, either one or both, for the privilege of witnessing its performance. The subject of a play may be chosen from life on the normal plane of human experience or the higher plane of fantasy and imagination. Both the action and the characters of the play may be dynamic, static, or passive. By action is designated every exhibition of revelative mobility in the characters themselves, whether corporeal or spiritual, relevant to the processes of elucidation and exposition of the play; as well as all events, explicit or implicit, in the outer world of deed or the inner life of thought, present or antecedent, which directly affect the destinies of the characters, immediately or ultimately. The characters may be evolutional, static, or mechanical—ranging from the higher forms of tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy through all forms of the play down to the lower species of melodrama, farce, and pantomime.

A common, but not an indispensable, attribute of the play is a crisis in events, material, intellectual or emotional, or a culminating succession of such crises; and such crisis generally, but by no means invariably, arises out of a conflict involving the exercise of the human will in pursuit of desiderated ends. A play may be lacking in the elements of conflict and crisis, either or both; since the pictorial and plastic, in an era of the picture-

frame stage in especial, are themselves legitimate and indispensable instrumentalities of stage representation. A play cannot be purely static, cannot wholly eliminate action. Physical, corporeal action may nevertheless be reduced to its lowest terms; and in such plays the action consists in the play of the intellect and of the emotions. All dramas are plays; all plays are not dramas. The drama may be defined as the play in which there is a distinctive plot, involving incidents actively participated in by the characters; a plot must be of such a nature that it can be clearly disengaged and succinctly narrated as a story. A drama involves the functioning of the human will, whether in the individual or in the mass; and includes within itself a crisis in the affairs of human beings. Dramatic is a term descriptive of the qualities inherent in, indispensable to, the drama. A play may or may not be dramatic. A drama is a particular kind of play.

The characteristic features of the contemporary play, as the result of the revolution of technic, may now be detailed. They are, concretely, the transposition of the crucial conjuncture from the outer world to the inner life; the enlargement of the conception of the dramatic conflict in order to include the clash of differing conceptions of conduct, standards of morality, codes of ethics, philosophies of life; the participation in such conflicts

not only of individuals, but also of type embodiments of social classes or even segments of the social classes themselves; the elimination of both conflict and crisis without denaturization of the literary species known as the play; the invention of the technic by which a single subject is explored from many points of view, as distinguished from the earlier technic in which many subjects are exhibited from a single point of view. Most profound and far-reaching of all changes has been the change wrought by the revolutionary spirit in morals, ethics, and social philosophy. The social has been added to the individual outlook; the temporal has been surcharged with the spirit of the eternal. The contemporary playwright devotes his highest effort to the salutary, if not wholly grateful task, of freeing mankind from the illusions which obsess and mislead. Until the scales fall from his eyes, the modern man cannot stand high and free, cannot fight the great fight against physical, social, institutional, and moral determinism. The drama of the modern era is essentially the drama of disillusion.

VII

THE NEW TECHNIC

"The critic will be always showing us the work of art in some new relation to our age. He will always be reminding us that great works of art are living things."—OSCAR WILDE.

THE average spectator in a theater unconsciously accepts, as "part of the game," the devices of authors and stage-managers to relieve the sense of unnaturalness inseparable from all stage representations. After becoming a confirmed playgoer, his sense of naturalness becomes less exigent; his acceptance of inevitable unnaturalness becomes second-nature with him. Only some gross violation of probabilities or some absurd lapse in fitness wakes him, with a start, to a realization of the tissue of conventions in which he is enveloped. When I witnessed Rostand's *Chantecler* in Paris, it was the fiction of illusion which was uppermost throughout. One's attention was successfully diverted from such secondary conditions as the meaning of the piece and the poetic eloquence of the lines to such primary considerations as: "How wonderfully, ridiculously like a blackbird is Galipaux, with his capricious hops and

flirts!" or "What a wonderful mechanical device it must be which enables the peacock to spread its tail!" or "How very unlike nature are many of those lumpy, awkward, costumed creatures!" It was quite another thing to me with Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* in London; the figures were symbolic, not realistic, and it was no strain upon the imagination, "ready and willing" to accept the personification of a loaf of bread or a jug of milk.

To secure the requisite sense of illusion in the theater, it is always a question of adapting the play to the proper plane of convention; the effort to make the plane of poetic fantasy coincide with the plane of complete realism clearly promises disaster. Despite their extravagant conventionality, the drawings of the heroes of the Cherokees executed by native artists serve as models for the Indians of the particular epoch—so realistic are the piercing eyes, the aquiline nose, the prominent cheek-bones, the cruel lips. In certain arts, an effort at closer approach to naturalness results in increased artificiality. One sees in the Luxembourg, for example, busts executed in marbles of various colors, dexterously joined together. This attempted realism only accentuates the sense of the conventions employed. Indeed, after a time, convention itself becomes reality. Any attempt at replacing the convention by a photographically realistic representation only ends disastrously.

Any audience will accept without the flutter of an eyelid the conventional Viking's ship. A perfect model of such real Viking's ships as I have seen in the National Museum of Christiania, Norway, with its excessive fragility, primitive log deck-cabin, and incredible smallness, would strike the average stage audience if presented on the stage in a play as a patent absurdity. All the arts take something for granted. The artist and the spectator enter into a conspiracy to wink at this, to accept that, in the interest of art. For however realistic may be the temper of any age, art is not and can never be mere photographic and exact imitation of life.

All art rests upon convention. The drama, which musters all the other arts into its service, involves innumerable tacit agreements between actors and audience. The drama is the most objective, most impersonal of all the arts, the result of the restrictions of physical and mechanical conditions. Yet it is, indubitably, that form of art which involves the greatest number of implied contracts. There is a tacit agreement between player and spectator that certain flagrant breaches of veracity are to be winked at—in fact, positively ignored; the requisite degree of the illusion of reality is absolutely precluded by the refusal to become a partner in this necessarily mutual compact. This tacit conspiracy, if originally

carried out in the proper spirit, becomes in course of time a totally unconscious process in the mind of the spectator. The moment one enters the theater he becomes a willing believer in the artificial operations of a mimic world, ruled by many laws and governed by many conventions, which do not obtain in the world of actuality. As the sculptor does not hesitate to execute a statue of George Washington in bronze, of Booker Washington in marble, so a Wagner produces a music drama dealing with a race of beings whose only mode of vocal communication is that of song. I cannot recall making a more palpable effort to fulfil the spectator's part in the contract than when I attended performances of the classic French drama at the Comédie Française, and writhed under the mechanical beat of the alexandrine, the conventionality of the intonations, the interminable length of the *tirades*. The shrill screams of Mounet-Sully at the Théâtre Francais, the conventionality of his postures and gestures, the spasmodic convulsiveness with which he carries off the interminable *longueurs*, all serve to tax the patience of the matter-of-fact Anglo-Saxon, unaccustomed to the conventions of French acting in the interpretation of Greek drama. In the Japanese tragic drama, the actors wear masks, and every gesture, every tone of voice, is an inherited convention. A hand is held two inches in front of the grinning masks rep-

resenting the actor's face—a gesture signifying tears—and the audience weeps in sympathy. Such manufactured pathos leaves the Occidental, unaccustomed to the convention, totally unmoved. In Japanese comedy, no masks are worn, thereby imparting far more mobility and verisimilitude to the representation; but the conventions of artificially pitched voice and mechanically prescribed movements and gesture prevail.

In language, the thrust toward realism is peculiarly the attribute of the contemporary drama. Congreve gave increased naturalness to his characters through the highly elastic prose which they employed; but they "talked like a book," nevertheless, in supple, undulant, literary prose. The convention of wit in the Restoration and post-Restoration comedies assuredly had some reasonable excuse in the fact that wit was the social criterion of the age; and when at last we come to Sheridan, a classic wit of English comedy, we find a drama in which wit has become a pure convention. Out of the mouths of maid-servants, valets, low fellows of the baser sort, fall epigrams and witticisms, every whit as brilliant as those of their masters. In the contemporary era, Oscar Wilde wrote a prose of incomparable style, beauty, and distinction; but so pervasive was his brilliance that there is, in his dramas, a faulty sense for characterization. Many of the best things said by

his characters are extrinsic, not germane to the action, and so perfectly interchangeable among themselves. To the true realist, there must be a virtual elimination of personal pyrotechnics or individual commentary—what the French describe as *mots d'auteur*. Countless speeches in Wilde's plays can be bodily removed without affecting the situation. I challenge any one to go over Ibsen's plays of modern life and delete anything—save connectives, exclamations, and interjections.

The case for the modern dramatic realist is admirably put by Ibsen in regard to *Emperor and Galilean* in his historic letter to Edmund Gosse, January 15, 1874: "You are of the opinion that the drama ought to have been written in verse, and that it would have gained by this. Here I must differ from you. The play is, as you must have observed, conceived in the most realistic style; the illusion I wished to produce was that of reality. I wished to produce the impression on the reader that what he was reading was something that had really happened. If I had employed verse, I should have counteracted my own intention and prevented the accomplishment of the task I had set myself. The many ordinary, insignificant characters whom I have intentionally introduced in the play would have been indistinct and indistinguishable from one another, if I had allowed them to speak in one and the same rhythmical

measure. We are no longer living in the days of Shakespeare. Among sculptors there is already talk of painting statues in the natural colors. I have no desire to see the Venus of Milo painted, but I would rather see the head of a negro executed in black than in white marble. Speaking generally, the style must conform to the degree of ideality which pervades the representation. My new drama is no tragedy in the ancient acceptation; what I desired to depict were human beings, and therefore I would not let them talk the 'language of the Gods.'"

In this paragraph is a passage which may be accepted as the formula of the modern dramatic realist: "*the style must conform to the degree of ideality which pervades the representation.*" If the drama is purely idealistic, the medium may very properly be rhymed verse; if only partially idealistic, with strongly realistic touches, the medium may be blank verse, in a combination of rhymed verse or blank verse, and prose; if, however, the drama is purely realistic, the language can only be prose, approximating to the spoken language of actual life. Of all the conventions of the drama, as modified by modern practice, that of dialogue exhibits the most remarkable alteration due to realistic theory and intention. Into his dramas of modern life, Ibsen put only that which he himself had lived through; and as a conse-

quence he could only express it in the most natural, comprehensible modern speech. After 1875, he confessed that he "exclusively cultivated the very much more difficult art of writing the genuine plain language spoken in real life." He was that "bold trampling fellow" of whom Beddoes speaks —who preferred "to beget than to revive." The full-fledged expression of Ibsen's views, representative of modern practice, is found in his letter to Lucie Wolf, May 25, 1883:—"Verse has been most injurious to dramatic art. A scenic artist whose department is the drama of the present day should be unwilling to take a verse in his mouth. It is improbable that verse will be employed to any extent worth mentioning in the drama of the immediate future; the aims of the dramatists of the future are almost certain to be incompatible with it. It is therefore doomed. For art forms become extinct, just as the preposterous animals of prehistoric times when their day was over."

Delightful comparisons might be instituted between the language employed in similar situations, in both comedy and tragedy, and at different periods in the drama's history. The chaff of poetic, declamatory, rhetorical, theatrical effects has in large measure been eliminated, by the fine-meshed sieve of realism, from the better drama of to-day. The hackneyed, the stereotyped, the conventional no longer have any standing. Modern

dramatic prose must not only convey the impression of actuality: it must be terse, crisp, expressive, undulating. Dialogue is the feature of the contemporary drama in which realism is at a maximum, convention at a minimum. Contemporary dramatic dialogue of the higher type, as found in Ibsen or Hauptmann, for example, may be said to be "stylicized," in one respect only: the characters enunicate no conviction that is not essential, that is not actually indispensable, as a means for the elucidation of character. The haphazard, the aimless, in dialogue is ruthlessly discarded. The test in Ibsen's case is quickly made: try to omit any passage or paragraph, and you will immediately discover that you have thereby lopped away an organic part of the dramatic structure. Such a method as that of Ibsen demands of the contemporary spectator the most concentrated attention. The auditor cannot afford to miss anything—since everything is underscored.

It is not, strictly speaking, a convention that contemporary dramatic dialogue must be convergent in its effect, pointing always toward the revelation of the characters or the explication of the situation. It is a convention reduced to the vanishing point that contemporary dramatic dialogue must not be an exact replica of the halting, exclamatory, repetitive, discursive speech of everyday life. The physical conditions of representa-

tion compel both economy of attention and economy of means; and as already pointed out, certain conventions in the theater are accepted as more real, more valid for the medium employed, than a minutely perfect reproduction of reality. The realistic reproduction of all conversations in full is inconceivable in a novel, even in a *Jean-Christophe*. It is, if anything, even more inconceivable in the drama, especially the modern drama of compression and culmination. If it were possible to create a perfectly realistic drama, it would require very much more than the "two hours traffick of the stage."

The indispensable esthetic principle governing the writing of modern dramatic dialogue has produced one significant consequence, in that it has made such dialogue exceedingly difficult to achieve successfully. It must not be merely literary or poetic; it cannot afford to be long-winded or irrelevant; it dare not be monotonous or merely businesslike. Its prerequisite is this: it must be always and everywhere germane to the action, attuned to the prevalent mood of the piece, and vocal of the emotional life, thought, passion, and sensibility of the characters. Only a genius could speak the dialogue of a play of Oscar Wilde's—this is the weakness of an antiquated conception of the drama. The average man or woman, living a tense life within specified intervals,

might conceivably employ the dialogue of the modern realist, Ibsen, Strindberg, Brieux. It must be granted that convention is there, none the less; for no race of people, at all times, ever spoke the dialogue of Ibsen, perfection of condensation, appositeness and brevity, or the dialogue of Shaw, for example, with its Hotchkiss rapid-fire of brilliant epigram, cogent argument, and driving dialectic.

A study of Ibsen's preliminary drafts for his plays has fully convinced me of the scientifically experimental side of his genius. He set the standard—this was the supremely difficult task of the pioneer and the genius. It was inevitable, once realism in dramatic art was established, that many of the artificial conventions of the past should ultimately be rejected by a generation which made naturalness the watchword and slogan of its art. Ibsen was noteworthy in escaping the obsession of the naturalism of sensation. Just as Turgenev, in protest against the physiological mania of Zola, avowed that he cared not whether a woman sweated under her arms or in the small of her back, so Ibsen expressed in his own work the most refined spirit of modern realism. For the physiological vulgarities of naturalism he substituted the psychological fitness of realism. Contrary to the view of the Frenchman, who said that language was invented for the purpose of concealing

thought, Ibsen's doctrine was that the object of dramatic language was to reveal character, thought, emotion—and with the utmost economy of means. No long speeches, no redundancy, no senseless multiplication of ideas that may be dispensed with. He used a word, a mere exclamation, a breath—if thereby he could reveal the psychological processes within the mind of the character. The modern dramatist has taught the modern auditor the trick of his method. To-day, the modern auditor demands the consideration due to one intelligently trained in the implicative suggestiveness, the psychological subtlety of contemporary dramatic prose.

Nothing to-day so conspicuously reveals the inexpert craftsman as the employment of the artificial devices which characterized the "well-made piece" of Scribe and the French school. Sardou's *A Scrap of Paper* is the last word of mechanical dexterity in craftsmanship. Nowadays the accidental, the adventitious, the psychologically improbable are rigorously excluded by the best modern craftsmen. The intelligent modern spectator cannot be imposed upon by the arbitrary or the coincidental happening. The happenings of the play, whether they are events in the ordinary physical sense or psychological changes in the characters themselves, must be inevitable consequences of the given circumstances and the given

personalities in those circumstances. An admirable example of such treatment is Mr. Eugene Walter's *The Easiest Way*, rigorous in its logic and mercilessly sincere in its handling of a hackneyed theme. This modern realistic tendency ordinarily expresses itself in the abandonment of the "curtain"—the theatrical *finale*. For to the modern realist a drama is no longer conceived as a succession of theatrical "situations"; it is a more or less accurate transcript of life, modified in accordance with the selective and interpretive genius of the dramatist. The contemporary craftsman seeks to convey a sense of the normality and continuity of life; the scenes have no end in the sense of a *finale*. Even the drama itself is not designed to create a sense of finality; the end of many a modern play leaves the spectator with a sense of life still going on after the fall of the curtain.

A notable consequence of the modern realistic attitude toward dramatic art is found in the austere rigor of the contemporary dramatist in regard to that most ancient of dramatic conventions, the soliloquy. The word itself, *soliloquium*, was coined by St. Augustine; and the root idea, speaking alone, has been preserved in the English word. There are many different variations and offshoots of the soliloquy; but in general it is true that soliloquies are always of two species. There is

the verbal soliloquy, in which the speaker is talking to himself, i.e. speaking aloud; and there is the mental soliloquy in which the speaker is voicing his inmost thoughts, that is, thinking aloud. There is the familiar device of the dialogic " aside," from which must be distinguished the monologue known as the " apart." The speaker of the soliloquy imagines himself alone, assumes himself alone, or temporarily forgets that he is not alone; whereas the speaker of the " apart " never even temporarily forgets the proximity of others. Soliloquies are usually employed as technical devices of the author for one or the other of two purposes—either as exposition monologues for the purpose of conveying to the audience in soliloquy facts needful for the understanding of the plot on the part of the audience, or as devices for exhibiting the designs of the dramatist, serving the purpose of self-characterization.

Throughout dramatic history the soliloquy is a conspicuous technical device of the dramatic craftsman. In the Greek dramas of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, pure soliloquys are comparatively infrequent, owing to the presence of the chorus; whilst in the dramas of Seneca the arbitrary confidant usually silently listens to the outpourings of the hero or heroine. The religious note of the soliloquies in the morality plays, with its tendency to religious introspection, prepared

the way, as Arnold in his study of the soliloquy as found in Shakespeare points out, for the Hamlet type of soliloquy in the Sheakespearean drama. In the hands of Shakespeare and Marlowe, the soliloquy reached its greatest vogue, variety, and perfection, revealing wide differentiation. It is only during the contemporary era that we observe the decline and virtual disappearance of the soliloquy, although Molière in his greatest achievements dispensed with this useful device.

Centuries ago criticism discovered the secret flaw in the soliloquy, and condemned it as an unnatural device. As long ago as 1657, the Abbé d'Aubignac in his *Pratique du Théâtre*, said: "First of all, an actor must never make a Monologue, which he addresses to the Audience, with a design to inform them of something they are to know; but there must be found out something in the Truth of the Action that may be colorable to make him speak in that manner." D'Aubignac thus accepts adequate motivation as a sufficient excuse for the narrative soliloquy; whereas Dryden, writing at about the same period (*Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, 1665), enters a strong *caveat* against the speech directed to the audience in order to "acquaint them with what was necessary to be known, but yet should have been so contrived by the poet as to have been told by persons of the drama to one another." A century later, the critics have

split up into two camps, as Cailhava (*De l'art de la comédie*, 1786) asserts, some wishing to banish utterly soliloquies, others wishing to multiply them. The crucial fact to be noted in this connection is that criticism, however hostile, had virtually no effect in achieving the abolition of the soliloquy. It was not until a great dramaturgic genius, inspired by the spirit of modern realism, came to the decision that the soliloquy violated the fundamental principle of naturalness, a necessity for the modern temperament, that the soliloquy received its death blow. It was not the critical iconoclast but the practising craftsman who banished the soliloquy and its poor relations to the limbo of outworn and faded stage properties.

As stage-manager, Henrik Ibsen produced many plays of the French school of Scribe, which left a marked influence upon his earlier dramas. In his own *Lady Inger of Oestraat* (1885), for example, Ibsen shows himself to be a very inexpert craftsman, much too frequently employing the convenient devices of the soliloquy and the aside. But intensive study of production, conducted in a thoroughly realistic spirit, soon convinced Ibsen that conventions which to a former age seemed indispensable to the drama were, after all, mere fashions of the stage or makeshifts of the inexpert craftsman. When Ibsen began to depict in prose the life of his own age, his incorruptible sense of

veracity led him to reject the artifical conventions employed in his earlier, technically derivative plays. *The League of Youth*, Ibsen's first play in prose, is a "well-made piece" in five acts after the familiar Scribe model. Yet it has historic significance, in that Ibsen here first prophesies by deed the realistic technic of the contemporary drama. In a letter to Georg Brandes (June 26, 1869), Ibsen says of his "new work": "It is written in prose, which gives it a strong realistic coloring. I have paid particular attention to form, and among other things I have accomplished the feat of doing without a single monologue—in fact, without a single aside." The powerful influence of his realistic practice, fortified by intense conviction, effected a revolution in stage technic; and fourteen years later we find him writing to Lucie Wolf: "My conviction, and my art principles forbid me (to write a prologue for a festival performance at the Christiania Theater, June, 1883). Prologues, epilogues, and everything of the kind ought to be banished from the stage. The stage is for dramatic art alone; and declamation is not dramatic art."

There is a certain modern school, embracing students of the stage and its changing mechanical conditions, who study the drama as a branch of political economy. To them, successful stage production is the final test of

dramatic art—although we know, nowadays, that there is no such thing as "the public" but innumerable "publics"; and in consequence, a disastrous failure in London may be a popular success in New York, a *succès d'estîme* in Paris may be a *succès de furore* in Vienna. The same play produced in different localities in the same city, and with identical casts, may in one case take and hold the popular fancy, in the other fail to get over the footlights. The exponents of the modern mechanical school of theater criticism dogmatically assert the predominant influence of the playhouse upon the drama, minimizing to the vanishing point the influence of the creative artist. At the risk of becoming unintelligible, let us remember that, to the mathematician, one variable is defined to be a "function" of another, if a certain variation in one is accompanied by a simultaneous variation in the other. Thus we say that u is a function of x $[u = f(x)]$. If one variable is a function of several others, say three variables, this is expressed by saying that u is a function of x, y, z $[u = f(x, y, z)]$. The mechanical theater critic thinks he has exhausted the subject when he affirms that the drama (u) is a "function" of the three variables —the theater (x), the actors (y), and the audience (z). The dramatic critic here loses sight of the fundamental mathematical truth that if y is a

function of x [$y = f(x)$], then it is reciprocally true that x is a function of y [$x = F(y)$]. Not only is the drama a function of the theater, the actors, and the audience. These, in their turn, in a certain perfectly specific sense, are themselves functions of the drama. The theater, the actor, the audience—each is a function of the drama. This, I take it, is the real meaning of the modern revolution in the art of the theater and the architectural reconstruction of the playhouse.

The dramatic critic is guilty of another cardinal oversight in attributing to the physical and mechanical intermediaries for the production of the drama, for the most part passive and plastic, an influence in importance and result equal to that of the creative artist himself. The confusion and fallacy now regnant in contemporary dramatic criticism will continue to prevail until it is frankly recognized: first, that the drama is not a "function" of the creative artist, but *is* the artist himself, in the same sense as *le style c'est l'homme;* and second, that the drama on the one hand, and the theater, public, and actors on the other, are reciprocal influences. The mechanical trade of building may exert a certain normalizing influence upon dramatic technic; but the creative art of the dramatist actually does exert, and in the future will increasingly exert, a predominant and constructive influence upon the playhouse, its shape,

structure, scenery, curtains, lighting, and an infinity of subsidiary questions. The contemporary movement has created an entirely new art of which the mechanical school of theater critics, oddly enough, seem miraculously ignorant. Craig, Reinhardt, Stanislavsky, Barker, Falk, D'Annunzio, Platt manipulate the theater and its devices as the great painter manipulates his colors. The very form and structure of the playhouse is beginning to undergo radical modification—in Munich, in Warsaw, in Berlin, in Buda-Pesth. The new technician in the theater, in contradistinction to the mechanical theater critic, realizes that the theater was made for the dramatist, and not that the dramatist was made for the theater. Far from conceding that the theater determines the form of the drama, the modern artist, thoroughly revolutionary in spirit, is prepared to alter the structural proportions of the playhouse at will in conformity with the new conditions imposed on the theater by the creative craftsman, or to abandon the theater entirely and go out into the open air.

From a study of the history of the drama, it is clear that neither criticism unsupported by the example of successful practice, nor great example unsupported by the wide prevalence of certain esthetic principles, sufficed to abolish the soliloquy. Otherwise, it would have been abolished in France

by Molière, in England by Dryden. If the form of the drama was conditioned by the physical exigencies of the theater, why did Molière on the tennis-court stage dispense with the soliloquy in the *Critique*, the *Impromptu* and the *Comtesse d'Escarbagnas;* or Corneille in the *Pompée*, *La suite du menteur*, *Théodore* and *Pertharite?* If the banishment of the soliloquy is "an inevitable consequence of the incandescent bulb," why is it that we find a long narrative monologue in Pinero's *Magistrate* (1885), for example, an elaborate soliloquy in Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, innumerable instances of soliloquies and asides in early works of both Pinero and Jones? It was, demonstrably, not until these men came under the influence of Ibsen's realistic technic (not, assuredly, as an "inevitable consequence of the incandescent bulb"!) that they banished the soliloquy—although all their plays were written for and produced on the picture-frame stage of the nineteenth century. Why do the soliloquy, the aside, and the apart still survive to-day in the melodrama and the farce, produced on this magic picture-frame stage?

To-day, nothing so shocks a sensitive critic—or indeed, a self-respecting audience—as to have to endure a play which opens by the descent of two persons to the footlights to carry on an expository conversation beginning: "It is now twenty-five

years since, etc." I can still summon the feeling of profound disgust with which, as a boy of eight, I witnessed the opening scene of a dramatization of Rider Haggard's *She:* two men sitting on a log for half an hour while they related half the story of the novel to put the audience *en rapport* with the situation. Equally unendurable to a modern audience, enjoying a highly cultivated realistic sense as a consequence of the revolutionary practice of Ibsen and the realistic spirit animating modern literature, is the device of the soliloquy or the monologue, serving as a first aid to ignorant audiences. A technical *tour de force,* to be sure, is Strindberg's *The Stronger,* a dramatic monologue addressed by one character to another, who remains silent though emotionally expressive throughout. The expository monologue here is the action, is the drama. Soliloquies are unreal—it is one of the conventions which the dramatist has succeeded in discarding. As a matter of fact, people sometimes—and not infrequently—do give audible expression to their thoughts and feelings when they are, or fancy themselves, alone. But the soliloquy of a sane man in actual life is exceedingly brief—a few words, or, at most, a few broken phrases. Such a soliloquy is allowable today, in comedy and even in the serious drama, since it is in perfect conformity with actual life. In the dramas of Ibsen we have happy illustrations

of this type of brief soliloquy—notably the five "link" speeches in *The Pillars of Society* (1877), the three brief soliloquies at the ends of the first and last acts of *A Doll's House* (1879), and the "Erhart! At Last!", the whispered words of Mrs. Borkman at the sound of the door-bell, opening the first act of *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896). According to the canons of to-day, the soliloquy is overdone in *A Doll's House:* Mrs. Linden's soliloquy at the opening of the third act is just barely permissible; but Nora's soliloquy at the opening of the second act is entirely indefensible—a survival of the artificial technic of Scribe and the French School. The soul struggles of the characters, the tumult of their inner emotions, are expressed most eloquently in the treatment given them by Ibsen in *Hedda Gabler* (1890) and *The Master Builder* (1892). More eloquent than explicit dialogue is the enigmatic finale of the second act of *The Master Builder:*

HILDA. (*Looks straight in front of her with a far-away expression, and whispers to herself. The only words audible are*) . . . frightfully thrilling. . . .

In *Hedda Gabler,* the ungovernable rage of Hedda over the exasperating tactlessness of Aunt Julia is expressed entirely in gesture: "HEDDA *walks about the room, raising her arms and clench-*

ing her hands as if in desperation. . . ." Surely no soliloquy in any contemporary drama is so horrifying in its effect, so evocative of the true dramatic pity and terror, as that at the close of the third act of the same play:

HEDDA. (*Throws one of the quires into the fire and whispers to herself.*) Now I am burning your child. Thea! . . . Burning it, curly-locks! (*Throwing one or two more quires into the stove.*) Your child and Eilert Lövborg's. (*Throws the rest in.*) I am burning—I am burning your child.

An unusually effective use of the soliloquy, in comedy, is the somnambulistic mental wandering of Bluntschli at the close of the first act of Shaw's *Arms and the Man* (1894). In the Preface to *Miss Julia,* Strindberg, essentially an experimental craftsman, has made a very interesting suggestion in regard to the monologue:

"Our realists have excommunicated the monologue as improbable; but if I can lay a proper basis for it, I can also make it seem probable, and then I can use it to good advantage. It is probable, for instance, that a speaker may walk back and forth in his room practising his speech aloud; it is probable that an actor may read through his part aloud, that a servant-girl may talk to her cat, that a mother may prattle to her child, that an old spinster may chatter to her parrot, that a person

may talk in his sleep. And in order that the actor for once may have a chance to work independently, and to be free for a moment from the actor's pointer, it is better that the monologues be not written out, but just indicated."

This bold suggestion of a return to the methods of the Italian *Comedia dell' arte* finds realization upon certain stages in Italy to-day. Thus far, however, this "new art form that might well be called productive," the art of improvisation, has not yet won its way into general recognition and adoption.

Dramatic craftsmanship has to-day reached a point of such complex excellence that the best dramatists refuse to employ such an unworthy device as the lengthy soliloquy; first, because it is fundamentally untrue to actual life; second, because it seeks to give information which may be more veraciously imparted in more natural ways; third, because new technical virtuosity has invented newer and more natural methods of exposition, thereby making possible the total abandonment of the lengthy soliloquy. Indeed, in an age marked as much by unparalleled communicativeness as by chronic introspection, the device of the soliloquy is superfluous. In the forthright dramas of to-day—from the farces of W. S. Gilbert and the comedies of Shaw to the tragi-comedies of Wedekind and the serious dramas of Ibsen

—the characters speak out in the presence of others with such revolutionary frankness, such fathomless naïveté, that the harboring of secret thoughts seems almost to have disappeared in the economy of contemporary civilization. The soliloquy, save of very brief length and in exceptional cases, is no longer needed by the "advanced" individual who prefers to tell everybody everything!

The aside, a minor form of soliloquy, is now forever relegated to the limbo of threadbare stage properties. It is a petty, bastard form of the soliloquy, serving either the serious purpose of discovering the intent of the character or the comic purpose of betraying his naïveté or sense of humor. The "stage whisper" is as universal a mark of derision as the mother-in-law joke or the Burgessic bromide—for no other reason than that it is absurdly unnatural, a contradiction in terms; and still survives merely as a sort of "dead give-away"—principally for comic effect. The aside still survives in the musical comedy, the farce, the melodrama, and even in light operas such as those of Gilbert and Sullivan. But the aside is condemned by the modern realist, who makes his characters utter aloud the daring iconoclasms, the mordant ironies, the solemn profundities they would once have uttered *sotto voce*. The device known as the apart is less crude than the aside; in mo-

ments of great tension people undoubtedly sometimes ejaculate or mutter, so as to be heard by those present, words indicative of their secret thoughts, momentarily uppermost in their minds. An effective modern use of the apart is the *sotto voce* exclamation of Christine at the close of Schnitzler's *Liebelei.* Christine's lover has been killed in a duel, fought because of another woman. When the news reaches her that her lover, whom she has last seen alive and well, is dead and actually buried, she wildly prays to be taken to his grave. All attempt to dissuade her—finally succeeding only by the cruel suggestion: "perhaps you'll find the other one there—praying."

CHRISTINE. (*To herself, her eyes fixed.*) I won't pray there. . . . No. . . . (*She rushes out; the others speechless for the moment.*)

The technic of Pinero, for all its vaunted smoothness and finish, is antiquated in its too constant resort to such devices as the aside and the apart—as compared with the almost austere naturalness of Ibsen. "The people of Sir Arthur Pinero," as Howe pertinently observes, "have a little scale of factitious inaudibility up and down which they run: *Thinking, To himself, Half to himself, To herself in a whisper, To herself in a low voice, In an undertone, Under her breath as he passes on, In her ear,* and so on."

Allied to the device of the soliloquy is that of the confidant, who for long has been wont to share the secrets of the protagonist. Instead of speaking solely to himself—or to the audience, if the allusion be wholly shattered,—the protagonist in this case confides his woes to a sympathetic listener. Frequently the confidant not only draws out the protagonist, but also grows quite communicative "off his own bat," thus materially furthering the action of the piece. By means of the confidant, as well as by means of the soliloquy, the audience is informed of many facts needful for a comprehension of the situation. As Sardou has confessed, the dramatist often finds himself controlled by the conditions of the situation which he projects; his only mode of escape is to have part of the plot, certain intervening links in the story, inserted through the intermediaries of confidences and personal confessions. The undisguised confidant, in the crudest form, is banished from the modern stage, because it is a spurious, and oftentimes unnatural means of furthering the action of the piece. But it is quite unreasonable to suppose that the confidant, naturally introduced and realistically portrayed, will ever disappear from the stage.

A play presumably connotes a hero, a heroine (either or both), a villain, and a confidant. We shall see, later on, how the hero, through the

presence of democracy re-enforced by modern feminism, has shown a steady degenerescence during the modern period. The "hero" as type began to exhibit a "spontaneous tendency to variation," as the result of bourgeois tendencies in civilization. Along another avenue, centuries earlier, the hero as type, through a "process of selective breeding," tended toward identification with the villain as type. The classic illustration is the *Richard III* of Shakespeare. In scientific terminology, the "villain" is the most remarkable "mutant" in the history of literature, as exhibiting the widest departure from the parent form of hero. If the naturally good man becomes the naturally bad man, and the tragic guilt becomes hardy crime, then the "hero" becomes the "villain." Under the pitiless searchlight of modern realistic criticism, the "stage villain," as type, has dropped out of sight. His light flickered, failed, and finally went out with Krogstad in *A Doll's House.* The confidant, as type, is subject to only superficial variations—since it is itself a parent form. The reason for this is simply that art here approximates to life with marvelous exactitude: for in life the confidant is a fixed quantity. Though the types, as stage entities, of "hero" and "villain" tend to lose their most conspicuous attributes, and the undisguised "confidant" recedes before the advance of real-

istic criticism, it must be obvious, on the score of human reality, that the "dominant" figures in the drama will always be the protagonist, the antagonist, and the sympathetic recipient of confidences.

The essential meaning of the contemporary drama is its intimacy, the confidential revelation of motives, thoughts, and feelings. The confidential friend is frequently portrayed by the rigorous craftsman—notably Ibsen, with Mrs. Linden in *A Doll's House*, Mrs. Elvsted in *Hedda Gabler*, and Dr. Herdal in *The Master Builder* as the most conspicuous examples. Bernard Shaw, who has vehemently protested against "recklessness in the substitution of dead machinery and lay figures for vital action and real characters," employs the confidant, more or less thinly disguised, in several of his plays—Praed in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, McComas in *You Never Can Tell*, Cokane in *Widowers' Houses*. In his *Creditors*, Strindberg builds up an entire play out of confidential revelations, a quite remarkable technical achievement—Gustav, the *diabolus ex machina*, accomplishing his revenge in winning elaborate confidences from husband and wife, Adolph and Tekla. In his *Liebelei*, Schnitzler makes every possible use of the confidant, in this case bosom friend and boon companion, who plays every rôle from that of procurer and second in

a duel to the mourner who performs the last sad rites! In Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, Cayley Drummle is so very serviceable as to excite smiles over the broken illusion of reality. Certainly it must be acknowledged that the rôle of confidential friend is a natural rôle played by almost every one every day of his life. Thousands of men and women in the world are peculiarly fitted by nature to play the part of confidant, and do actually go through life playing nothing else. The confidential friend will always play his part on the stage—on the conditions that he be naturally presented, and that his presence be not extraneous or adventitious, but integral and vital to the psychological processes of the action.

Ibsen's later dramas afford a peculiarly instructive illustration of his technical dexterity in exposition, or rather, in explication. These dramas are frequently reminiscent in tone; a considerable part of the explication consists in the narration of events which have transpired in the past. This is an inevitable attribute of the drama of recessive action. Ibsen early learned to dispense with the antiquated scene in which two characters baldly tell each other things which the auditor needs to learn. In certain of his most carefully wrought-out plays, characters who have not seen each other for a long time meet again; and, in the course of their reminiscences which arise in the most natural fashion,

many antecedent events and circumstances are brought to light. This device is employed again, and again—in *The Pillars of Society, A Doll's House, Ghosts, Rosmersholm, The Lady from the Sea, Hedda Gabler, The Master Builder, When We Dead Awaken.* This technic, remarkably skilful as it is, is really a modern substitution for the artificial device of the confidant. It is only an added proof of Ibsen's technical virtuosity.

In the Greek drama, the chorus served as intermediary between author and audience, conveying at once the requisite information for advancing the action and the author's purport and designs. In modern times, we are confronted in the drama with a sort of individualized Greek chorus, devised to bridge over the yawning gap between dramatist and public. Such a figure becomes classified in French drama as the *raisonneur*, the expositor and interpreter of the author's intention. In another light we may look upon this figure with the eyes of the Germans, and classify him as the ideal spectator—a reincarnation of the man of sound esthetic instincts, himself the standard and final arbiter of taste—of Aristotle's *Poetics* (ὁ χαρίεις). In the plays of Dumas *fils*, for the most part given over to the inculcation of peculiarly Gallic doctrines of individual and social morality, the *raisonneur* is well-nigh indispensable for giving sharp definition of the author's

thesis. In such a polemic play as *An Enemy of the People* Ibsen gives strong driving force to his thesis by combining in the person of Dr. Stockman the rôles of hero and social exegete. In *The Wild Duck*, he epitomizes the ironic strain of the piece in the person of the unilluded observer, Dr. Relling. In both Stockman and Relling, be it noted, the features of the man, Ibsen, are readily distinguishable. In such a contemporary German drama as Sudermann's *Die Ehre*, Count Trast seems little more than a personal epitome of the author's interpretation of the title; in Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, Cayley Drummle proves doubly useful—as confidant and as genial embodiment of social criticism, of the world's view-point; while in Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island*, Keegan the priest is the individualized Greek chorus *par excellence*. In the drama of ideas, the thesis-play, in which the author endeavors to generalize about life from a specific case, there is always a strong pressure in favor of a character who will serve to give unmistakably a succinct exposition of the thesis. Hence it is that the plays of such dramatists as Hervieu, Brieux, and Shaw have a schematic cast, and ordinarily contain some character or even characters, of which one indispensable characteristic is to justify the works of the author to his public. Such characters seem to be mere mouth-

pieces of the author, and so exhibit a certain mechanical rigidity literally comic.

Without needlessly multiplying examples, we may conclude that dramatic art has not yet succeeded in dispensing with some variant form of the ancient Greek chorus, call it by whatsoever name you will. The *raisonneur*, though modern in appearance, in reality is only the survival of one of the oldest of the conventions of the drama. It is one of those conventions, structurally inherent in technical chirography, by which the dramatist meets the audience half-way in the task of interpretation. As the lyric is the most subjective, the drama is the most objective form of literary art. It was Victor Hugo who said that drama is the art of being somebody else; and assuredly the successful dramatist must never merely take sides in a dramatic wrangle or "load the dice" against characters holding views of life antagonistic to his own. Every character must have his say without let or hinderance; and the dramatist must avoid the attitude of the partisan. Galsworthy is a conspicuous contemporary exemplar of the dramatist of complete impartiality. The *raisonneur* or expositor survives to-day, less as replica of contemporary humanity, than as symbol of the dramatist's personal struggle to obviate the extreme objectivity of drama. The thesis-drama, the

drama with a purpose, is importing into dramatic art, as practised to-day, a new, an increased subjectivity. Unsympathetic critics affirm that the plays of Shaw and Brieux are merely ingenious excuses of Shaw and Brieux for giving lectures on social morality. In an age marked by sociological speculation and persistent moral propagandism, the *raisonneur* typifies the critical cast, the polemical passion, of modern thought.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PLAY AND THE READER

"The human mind is essentially partial. It can be efficient at all only by *picking out* what to attend to, and ignoring everything else—by narrowing its point of view. Otherwise, what little strength it has is dispersed, and it loses its way altogether."—WILLIAM JAMES.

As recently as the year 1906 Mr. Henry Arthur Jones gave testimony, which to-day seems almost incredible in view of the remarkable change that has come about, in regard to the practice of publishing plays. "On talking over the matter with a leading American actor," he said, "I was delighted to find him at one with me in desiring that the immediate publication and circulation of plays may become an established custom amongst us." Ten years earlier, according to Mr. Bernard Shaw, it was virtually impossible to secure a publisher for modern plays. The answer to queries was stereotyped: "No use; people won't read plays in England." The real sufferer in the case was not only the dramatist of the advanced type, who, because his plays were not commercially adapted to long runs, was thus deprived of all means

of reaching the public, either through the theater or the printed play—save at a personal financial sacrifice; but also the public, both readers and theater-goers, who were thus effectively shut off from the dramatists, or would-be dramatists, because of an economic fact doubtless based in part upon a misconception.

This misconception has been corrected in the main by three forces which have been persistently at work during the past fifteen years. The plays of Ibsen have never been generally successful on the stage of English-speaking countries in the degree attained on the Continent, although, to be sure, there have been, now and then, isolated instances in which some play of Ibsen has won popular success. On the other hand, the plays of Ibsen translated into English have steadily won a wide and ever-increasing reading public. Such an influence has undoubtedly exercised a revolutionary effect upon the economic conditions of the publishing trade. For the publisher quite properly argued that if the plays of foreign dramatists, even in translations more or less inadequate, achieved a steady sale, it was quite likely that the plays of native dramatists who were men of letters as well might prove commercially profitable. A socialist like Bernard Shaw, with socialistic views on business, in 1898 published in two volumes his *Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant.* He boldly took

the financial risk of the transaction, in his unusual and eccentric contract, realizing that this was the only adequate means of reaching the public which his plays were designed to interest. Such an incident is significant in the history of the publishing of plays in English; for Shaw demonstrated that plays, stoutly bound and well printed, were salable commodities.

A final impetus has been given to the publishing of plays, not only by the swing of the dramatic movement, the popularization of the idea of reading plays as literature, but also by the unremitting efforts of critics and students of the contemporary drama to bring the best examples to the attention of the public. I might mention a large number of critics, men and women, in both England and America, who have unselfishly labored in the interest of the contemporary drama, in order to restore it to the public consciousness as a branch of published literature. In this country striking results have flowed from the courses in the modern drama offered at the leading American universities—notably Harvard, Columbia, and Yale. To-day there are a large number of colleges and universities, including State institutions, which offer courses in the modern drama. The plays of the best playwrights in England and America—notably Shaw, Galsworthy, Wilde, Pinero, Jones, and Barker; and Fitch, Thomas, Moody, and Mackaye—can

now be secured in printed form, in cheap as well as in expensive editions.

The drama of to-day, whether of Ibsen or Brieux, D'Annunzio or Shaw, Hauptmann or Synge, has won international hearing as a published work of literature, no less than as a play produced in a theater. In France there has not been any real divorce in modern times between literature and the drama; but the same is not true of the Germanic countries. After a long, if amicable separation, the reunion between literature and the drama has at last been effected in England and the United States as well as in Germany and Austria. In the United States in particular there is a greater relative consumption of "outlander" plays, either in English or translated into English, I venture to say, than in any other country. There are comparatively few plays by English and American dramatists which are translated into foreign languages; and it is indisputable that there is only a very small, though gradually growing, number of students of the English and American drama in France, Germany, Austria, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries. Translations into many languages of the works of men of thought and originality, such as Wilde and Shaw, have paved the way; and the time is assuredly not far distant when the wave of cosmopolitan culture will sweep down all barriers

in the path of its irresistible progress. Such an organization as *The Drama League of America* has within its hands the opportunity of revolutionizing public sentiment and public judgment of drama, and bringing about its universal recognition as one of the supreme cultural forces of the century.

The popularization of the printed play, as a phase of the resurgence of the drama in English-speaking countries, is one of the most momentous of literary phenomena of the period. A direct consequence of this new movement is the development in the form and technic of the contemporary printed play. The school of modern realism, seizing upon the mystery and immensity of little things, has exhibited as one of its chief characteristics the apotheosis of the insignificant. We of to-day have been wakened to a consciousness of the miracle of the commonplace, the significance of the insignificant. This realistic movement has wrought its indelible effect upon the modern drama, in technic as in content. The drama, by reason of its temporal and physical restriction, can never exhibit the elaboration, detail, and minute character delineation of the novel. But the dramatist who intends to write drama that shall be literature as well must bring his highest literary expertness to bear in order to achieve a certain realism, a certain naturalness in the

printed play, and thereby bring it into competition, as both commercial commodity and artistic product, with the elaborate fiction of the realistic novelist, such as James, Bourget, or Edith Wharton. In order to accomplish this difficult task two things are necessary: to write nothing in a play that you would not write in a novel, and to import into the art of writing drama, in so far as is permitted by the restrictions of the theater, the methods of the realistic novelist. To put it another way, the dramatist is beginning to do away entirely, in the published play, with everything that reminds the reader of a theater and its accessories. At the same time, in order so far as possible to substitute the author's actual conception for the actor's interpretation of the characters, the dramatist has begun to describe each character as he appears, with sufficient particularity, and from time to time to specify his movements, his gestures, and the emotional play of his features. By these thoroughly realistic methods the dramatist has done away with the hideous jargon of the theatric code, the scenic chirography which used to make a play read like an architect's specifications. It was Shaw who, as the most eminent and original exemplar of this new dramatic realism, protested against the practice of those playwrights "who deliberately make their plays unreadable by flinging repulsive

stage technicalities in the face of the public, and omitting from their descriptions even that simplest common decency of literature, the definite article. I wonder how many readers Charles Dickens would have had, or deserved to have, if he had written in this manner:

[Sykes *lights pipe—calls dog, loads pistol with newspaper, takes bludgeon from R. above fireplace, and strikes* Nancy.] Nancy: Oh, Lord, Bill! [*Dies.* Sykes *wipes brow—shudders—takes hat from chair O. P.—sees ghost, not visible to audience—and exit L. U. E.*]."

The purpose of the new technic is to translate the play from the sign language of specifications into the language of reality—to replace jargon by art. A reference to practising craftsmen of the contemporary period will suffice to exhibit how recent has been the change. The worst features of "French's Acting Edition," for instance, are found in this "horrible example" from Augustus Thomas's *Alabama*, first produced in 1890.

Act III

Scene: Ruined gate-way, C. Masonry post, R, standing; the other, L, in ruins. Virginia creepers over both. Fragment of wall on either side. Background of tropical shrubbery. Calcium on for

moon, illuminating wall, and front of stage only. All back of wall in almost total darkness. Foot-lights down to a glow. No border lights. Song off by negroes, before rise of curtain, "Carry me back," continued diminuendo after curtain is up. Discovered: DAVENPORT *and* MRS. PAGE.

No effort has been made here, it will be observed, to spare the reader the meaningless lingo which, to the stage-manager, is expressive description. If we go back to Ibsen, and examine his dramas from *The League of Youth* onward, we shall observe that he never uses stage jargon; and that, as he perfected his technic, his stage directions passed from the extremely laconic to the adequately descriptive. Take first the opening description of *The League of Youth:*

"*The Seventeenth of May. A popular fête in the Chamberlain's grounds. Music and dancing in the background. Colored lights among the trees. In the middle, somewhat towards the back, a rostrum; to the right, the entrance to a large refreshment tent; before it, a table with benches. In the foreground, on the left, another table, decorated with flowers, and surrounded with lounging-chairs. A crowd of people.* LUNDESTAD, *with a committee badge at his buttonhole, stands on the rostrum.* RINGDAL, *also with a committee badge, at the table on the left.*

Ibsen's characters were often more real to him than his personal acquaintances. He knew his characters almost from their birth—in ancestral hereditament, in the features of their environment, in nascent qualities. The plays themselves are "infinitely *noted*"; but the above stage description is bare to the point of nakedness. The plays are divided into "acts"; in the earlier plays the descriptions may call attention to the stage of a theater; there is no attempt at description of the characters. If we turn now to the opening scene of *Hedda Gabler*, we shall notice a marked change in the direction of greater elaboration:

A spacious, handsome, and tastefully furnished drawing-room, decorated in dark colors. In the back, a wide door-way with curtains drawn back, leading into a smaller room decorated in the same style as the drawing-room. In the right wall of the front room, a folding-door leading out to the hall. In the opposite wall, on the left, a glass door, also with curtains drawn back. Through the panes can be seen part of a veranda outside, and trees covered with autumn foliage. An oval table, with a cover on it, and surrounded with chairs, stands well forward. In front, by the wall on the right, a wide stove of dark porcelain, a high-backed arm-chair, a cushioned foot-rest, and two foot-stools. A settee, with a small round table in

front of it, fills the upper right-hand corner. In front, on the left, a little way from the wall, a sofa. Further back than the glass door, a piano. On either side of the door-way at the back, a what-not with terra-cotta and majolica ornaments. Against the back wall of the inner room, a sofa, with a table and one or two chairs. Over the sofa hangs the portrait of a handsome elderly man in a general's uniform. Over the table, a hanging lamp, with an oval glass shade. A number of bouquets are arranged about the drawing-room, in vases and glasses. Others lie upon the tables. The floors in both rooms are covered with thick carpets. Morning light. The sun shines in through the glass door.

Miss Juliana Tesman, *with her bonnet on and carrying a parasol, comes in from the hall, followed by* Berta, *who carries a bouquet wrapped in paper.* Miss Tesman *is a comely and pleasant-looking lady of about sixty-five. She is nicely but simply dressed in a gray walking-costume.* Berta *is a middle-aged woman of plain and rather countrified appearance.*

Here we observe that the description is minute in its detail, and that there is a tiny thumb-nail sketch of each character. The description of the room, we remark, consists after all only in specifications; so that when we see the play, as I have

seen it at the Lessing Theater in Berlin, we observe it to be an exact replica of the room described by Ibsen. Furthermore, the principal characters, when they enter, are projected before one in little cameos, which indelibly fix their personality upon one's consciousness.

(HEDDA *enters from the left through the inner room. She is a woman of nine-and-twenty. Her face and figure show refinement and distinction. Her complexion is pale and opaque. Her steel-gray eyes express a cold, unruffled repose. Her hair is of an agreeable medium brown, but not particularly abundant. She is dressed in a tasteful, somewhat loose-fitting morning gown.*)

Ibsen pursued a genuinely scientific method in his studies of character and society; and in consequence, no doubt, deemed it unnecessary to elaborate personal descriptions of characters which are fathomed in the exposition of the play itself, as he expressed it, "down to the last fold of their souls."

The German and Austrian dramatists, for the most part, have not yet succeeded in putting their stage directions in language which does not refer directly to the stage itself. For example, Hauptmann, in *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, gives a diagram of the scene; so also does Schnitzler in certain of his plays. *Il Più Forte*, by the Italian, Giacosa, is

noticeable by reason of this peculiarity. Bahr is very effective in his artistic pen-portraits of the characters. Pinero uses a much more summary method in stage descriptions than does Ibsen in his later manner, as well as a very laconic description of the characters. Illustrations from *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* are characteristic:

The scene is a room in the Palazzo Arconati, on the Grand Canal, Venice. The room itself is beautiful in its decayed grandeur, but the furniture and hangings are either tawdry and meretricious or avowedly modern. The three windows at the back open on to a narrow, covered balcony, or loggia, and through them can be seen the west side of the canal. Between the recessed double-doors, on either side of the room, is a fireplace out of use, and a marble mantel-piece, but a tiled stove is used for a wood fire. Breakfast things are laid on a table. The sun streams into the room.

(Agnes *enters. She moves firmly but noiselessly—a placid woman with a sweet, low voice. Her dress is plain to the verge of coarseness; her face, which has little color, is at first glance almost wholly unattractive.*)

In the case of D'Annunzio, the artist continually asserts himself throughout his plays, no mat-

ter in how apparently insignificant details. Conceiving the drama to be an expression of the highest art of the poet, he has filled every interstice of his poems with the sense, the odor, the color of poetry. Thus, in *Gioconda*, the character of the rooms artistically expresses the character of the owners; he makes us feel this as an element of the emotional atmosphere of the piece. Thus, following the description of a certain room, comes this passage:

The sentiment expressed by the aspect of the place is very different from that which softens the aspect of the room in the other house, over against the mystic hill. Here the choice and analogy of every form reveal an aspiration towards a carnal, victorious, and creative life. The two divine messengers seem to stir and widen the close atmosphere incessantly with the rush of their immense flight.

It is the conviction of D'Annunzio that it is his primary function, as artistic technician, to create an atmosphere of real life. This is possible only through the effort to cast stage directions—"business"—into the form of art, not into mere ejaculated, shorthand commands to the actor; never to mention the stage or any of its properties; always to create the completest possible artistic illusion. A few of his stage directions, cited

below, indicate their two-fold rôle; to convey to the reader the emotional under-currents of the dramatic movement, and to the actor a sense of his task.

(*A pause, burdened with a thousand undefined, and inevitable things.*)

. . . . .

(*Involuntarily she turns, and looks around the room, as if to embrace everything that is in it with one look. The curtains tremble, the rain increases. She breathes in the damp fragrance that enters at the window. For one instant the strung bow of her will slackens.*)

. . . . .

(. . . *The water gathers tremulously in her eyes. Two marvelous tears form little by little, shine, and slowly run down her cheeks. Before they reach her mouth she stops them with her fingers, diffuses them over her face, as if to bathe in lustral dew; for it is not by the remembrance or the trace of human bloodshed that she is moved, but by the sight of a thing of beauty, solitary and free. She has received the supreme gift of beauty; a truce to anguish, a pause to fear. The sublime lightning-flash of joy has shone through her wounded soul for an instant, rendering it crystalline as tears. These tears are but the soul's mute and ardent offering before a masterpiece.*)

This is poetry; this is art. It may, however, be urged with reason by the puzzled actress that she is quite unable to make "two tears slowly run down her cheeks." Signor D'Annunzio would be entirely within his rights, as a defender of the new technic, in retorting: "You cannot deny that I have enthralled the reader of my play. And as for you, the player—I have described in poetic language the external act of the characters, and also the spiritual states through which they pass. It is for you, as an artist in your domain, to realize these expressions, in his own domain, of another artist—myself. How you do it is not my concern: it is your concern as an interpreter of the spirit of the new drama."

Oscar Wilde was a remarkable genius, beyond doubt. As a dramatist he was guilty of the gravest technical faults, was positively mawkish in his sentimentality, and absurdly conventional in stage morals. Yet because he was a consummate stylist, a conversational prodigy, an artist in every fiber, he triumphed signally over his tremendous handicaps. Certain of his descriptions of his characters are like delicate miniatures—such, for instance, as this of Sir Robert Chiltern in *Lady Windermere's Fan:*.

A man of forty, but looking somewhat younger. Clean-shaven, with finely-cut features, dark-haired

and dark-eyed. A personality of mark. Not popular —few personalities are. But intensely admired by the few, and deeply respected by the many. The note of his manner is that of perfect distinction, with a slight touch of pride. One feels that he is conscious of the success he has made in life. A nervous temperament with a tired look. The finely-chiseled mouth and chin contrast strikingly with the romantic expression in the deep-set eyes. The variance is suggestive of an almost complete separation of passion and intellect, as though thought and emotion were each isolated in its own sphere through some violence of will-power. There is no nervousness in the nostrils, and in the pale, thin, pointed hands. It would be inaccurate to call him picturesque. Picturesqueness cannot survive the House of Commons. But Van Dyck would have liked to paint his head.

Delightful as is such a description, it is marked by one fault to which attention must be clearly directed. The two indispensable obligations of the new technic are that stage descriptions and stage directions must neither remind the reader of the stage nor shatter the illusion of perfect objectivity by obtruding the personality of the author between the reader and the dramatic characters. Unpardonable from the latter standpoint is the typical Oscarism: "Picturesqueness cannot sur-

vive the House of Commons." And Wilde frequently breaks the first rule as well by reminding the reader of the stage and its properties.

The greatest master of the new technic is Bernard Shaw. As I pointed out at some length in his biography, Shaw has made a genuine contribution to the art of the drama, both critical and constructive. It has been his aim to create not mere drama, but genuine literature. Through long and cloistral preoccupation with the science and art of dramatic representation, Ibsen developed in supreme degree his faculty of stereoscopic imagination. Writing to the Reverend Christian Hostrup from Munich in 1888, he remarked: "I hardly ever go to the theater here, but I enjoy reading a play now and then in the evening; and as I have a powerful imagination where anything dramatic is concerned, I can see everything that is really natural, authentic, and credible happening before my eyes. The reading of the play produces almost the same effect as its performance."

In the same way, through his experience as a constructive dramatist, and his career as a dramatic critic, Shaw learned the secret of effecting the complete visualization of the painted sets of the stage. In the construction of his plays he has constantly borne in mind the four factors involved: the author, the reader, the actor, and the

spectator. From the standpoint of the author, he has demonstrated by his practice that the bar to the publication of the contemporary drama is the repulsive stage jargon of the prompt book. From the standpoint of the reader he has demonstrated, as a modern "realist" basing his plays on a "scientific natural history," that the secret of making the modern play readable is to abandon "acts" and "scenes," and to endow the play with the finish and elaboration of the highest forms of contemporary realistic fiction. "Everything that the actor or the scene-painter *shows* to the audience must be described—not technically specified, but imaginatively, vividly, humorously, in a word, artistically described—to the reader by the author. In describing the scene, take just as much trouble to transport your reader's imagination as you would in a narrative. Your imaginary persons must not call 'off the stage'; your guns must not be fired 'behind the scenes'; you must not tell the public that 'part of the stage is removed to represent the entrance to a cellar.' It will often strain your ingenuity to describe a scene so that, though a stage manager can set it from the printed description, yet not a word is let slip that could remind the reader of the footlights. But it can be done; and the reward for the trouble is that people can read your plays—even actor-managers, who suffer just as much from the deadening, disillusion-

izing, vulgarizing effect of the old-fashioned stage direction as other people do."

The most awkward barrier to the success of the work of a dramatic craftsman is the actor. How and when shall the author assure himself that his intentions shall be adequately expressed by the histrionic interpreter? Benedetto Croce has pointed out, in his *Aesthetic*, that in order to be the true critic—that is to say, the true interpreter—one must rise to the level of the creator, and in that moment identify oneself *with* the creator. So the actor, in order to interpret the designs of the dramatist, must rise to the level of the dramatist and for the moment effect the esthetic identification. Many of Ibsen's plays on their first and early stage representations must have been most inadequately acted. The stage directions were insufficiently detailed to break through the mechanical traditions of "character acting." Even when Ibsen himself directed the rehearsals he was incapable of securing from the players the effects he sought. As Strindberg once remarked: "I have heard that Norway's greatest dramatist at rehearsal wrote down his directions on paper, but that not a single one was ever followed." In speaking of his personal experience as dramatist-producer, Strindberg confesses that he has often seen an actor give an interpretation of a rôle quite different from his own conception of the

character. "In case the interpretation was consistently worked out I made no alterations in it, but let the actor alone. It is better for him to carry out his conception of the character, as he has thought it out for himself, than for me to shatter his creation, which has both unity and consistency." I have in mind several instances in which, according to his own confession, Mr. Shaw followed a precisely similar course—this, too, despite the elaborate exposition of scenic and character description, of details of interpretative acting, which his method supplies.

In a large sense, the new technic is a sort of "Acting Made Easy"; for the dramatist, out of his own imagination, furnishes an infinitude of infinitesimal, but essential, details for the information of the interpreter. Did the dramatist, the first cause and final arbiter, not supply this wealth of detail, the actor would be obliged to supply it himself. There can be no doubt that, in such an event, the actor would supply it—and supply it wrong. "There is the actor (who is nowadays the manager also)," observes Mr. Shaw, "an exceptionally susceptible, imaginative, fastidious person, easily put out by the slightest incongruity, easily possessed by the slightest suggestion. His work is so peculiar and important; its delicacy depends so much on the extent to which a play can be made real to him and the technical conditions

reduced to unnoticed matters of habit; above all, it is so necessary to his self-respect that the obligation he is under to make himself a means to the author's end should not be made an excuse for disregarding his dignity as a man, that an author can hardly be too careful to cherish the actor's illusion and respect his right to be approached as a professional man and not merely ordered to do this or that without knowing why."

Shaw is essentially a sociologist. His scenic descriptions are not mere specifications of furniture and scenery. They are actually essays in social criticism. In like manner his descriptions of characters are little vignettes of social as well as individual psychology. His stage directions are designed to enlighten the reader, and to assist the actor in the task of interpreting character. All this is quite as it should be. The description of the dentist's operating room in *You Never Can Tell*, for example, or of Ramsden's study in *Man and Superman*, is at once an epitome and an arraignment of a social era. A phase of ethical or industrial evolution is compressed into an artistic snapshot of a parlor. Perhaps no more satisfactory illustration of Shaw's method, of scenic and character description combined, is to be found in his plays than the opening of *The Devil's Disciple:*

At the most wretched hour between a black night and a wintry morning in the year 1777 Mrs. Dudgeon, of New Hampshire, is sitting up in the kitchen and general dwelling-room of her farm-house on the outskirts of the town of Websterbridge. She is not a prepossessing woman. No woman looks her best after sitting up all night; and Mrs. Dudgeon's face, even at its best, is grimly trenched by the channels into which the barren forms and observances of a dead Puritanism can pen a bitter temper and a fierce pride. She is an elderly matron who has worked hard, and got nothing by it except dominion and detestation in her sordid home, and an unquestioned reputation for piety and respectability among her neighbors, to whom drink and debauchery are still so much more tempting than religion and rectitude that they conceive goodness simply as self-denial. This conception is easily extended to others-denial, and finally generalized as covering anything disagreeable. So Mrs. Dudgeon, being exceedingly disagreeable, is held to be exceedingly good. Short of flat felony, she enjoys complete license except for amiable weaknesses of any sort, and is, consequently, without knowing it, the most licentious woman in the parish on the strength of never having broken the seventh commandment or missed a Sunday at the Presbyterian church.

The year 1777 is the one in which the passions roused by the breaking-off of the American colonies from England, more by their own weight than their own will, boiled up to shooting point, the shooting being idealized to the English mind as suppression of rebellion and maintenance of British dominion, and to the American as defense of liberty, resistance to tyranny, and self-sacrifice on the altar of the Rights of Man. Into the merits of these idealizations it is not here necessary to inquire; suffice it to say, without prejudice, that they have convinced both Americans and English that the most high-minded course for them to pursue is for them to kill as many of one another as possible, and that military operations to that end are in full swing, morally supported by confident requests from the clergy of both sides for the blessing of God on their arms.

Under such circumstances many other women besides this disagreeable Mrs. Dudgeon find themselves sitting up all night waiting for news. Like her, too, they fall asleep towards morning, at the risk of nodding themselves into the kitchen fire. Mrs. Dudgeon sleeps with a shawl over her head, and her feet on a broad fender of iron laths, the step of the domestic altar of the fire-place, with its huge hobs and boiler, and its hinged arm above the smoky mantel-shelf for roasting. The plain kitchen table is opposite the fire at her elbow, with

a candle on it in a tin sconce. Her chair, like all the others in the room, is uncushioned and unpainted; but, as it has a round railed back and a seat conventionally molded to the sitter's curves, it is, comparatively, a chair of state. The room has three doors, one on the same side as the fireplace, near the corner, leading to the best bedroom; one, at the opposite end of the opposite wall, leading to the scullery and washhouse; and the house door, with its latch, heavy lock, and clumsy wooden bar, in the front wall, between the window in its middle, and the corner next the bedroom door. Between the door and the window a rack of pegs suggests to the deductive observer that the men of the house are all away, as there are no hats or coats on them. On the other side of the window the clock hangs on a nail, with its white wooden dial, black iron weights, and brass pendulum. Between the clock and the corner a big cupboard, locked, stands on a dwarf dresser full of common crockery.

On the side opposite the fire-place, between the door and the corner, a shamelessly ugly black horsehair sofa stands against the wall. An inspection of its stridulous surface shows that Mrs. Dudgeon is not alone. A girl of sixteen or seventeen has fallen asleep on it. She is a wild, timid-looking creature with black hair and tanned skin. Her frock, a scanty garment, is rent, weather-

stained, berry-stained, and by no means scrupulously clean. It hangs on her with a freedom which, taken with her brown legs and bare feet, suggests no great stock of underclothing.

Suddenly there comes a rapping at the door, not loud enough to wake the sleepers. Then knocking which disturbs Mrs. Dudgeon a little. Finally the latch is tried, whereupon she springs up at once.

Excellent illustrations of stage directions, solely designed for the purpose of assisting the reader in understanding the situation, the actor in interpreting the rôle, are found in this same play:

(JUDITH *smiles, implying "How stupid of me"!*)

BURGOYNE. (*To* DUDGEON) "By the way, since you are not Mr. Anderson, do we still, —eh, Major Swindon?" (*Meaning, "do we still hang him?"*)

It is regrettable, in view of Shaw's admirable effort to achieve a new form of technic, that he has fallen into one unpardonable error. A certain piquancy in the reading, perhaps, derives from Shaw's practice of speaking, in his descriptions, in his own person. Perhaps, too, a certain laxity might be granted in comedy which would be forbidden in the serious drama. But to

the dramatist, realistic in spirit, who avowedly founds his characters on a "genuinely scientific natural history," there is no legitimate excuse for obtruding the refractory lens of his own temperament between the reader and the characters of the drama. In *The Devil's Disciple* Shaw appeals to history thus:

("... *Mrs. Dudgeon, now an intruder in her own home, stands erect, crushed by the weight of the law on women.—For at this time, remember, Mary Wollstonecraft is as yet only a girl of eighteen, and her Vindication of the Rights of Women is still fourteen years off.*")

The single word, "remember," conjures up the figure of the social philosopher, Shaw, lecturing to us with critical forefinger upraised. It is the outworn method of the novelist, with his discursive moralizings addressed to the "Gentle Reader." In *Man and Superman*, a direct allusion to the drama itself, Shaw's besetting sin, is conspicuous:

How old is Roebuck! The question is important on the threshold of a drama of ideas; for under such circumstances everything depends on whether his adolescence belonged to the sixties or to the eighties.

. . . . .

He (Mr. Robinson) must, one thinks, be the jeune premier; for it is not in reason to suppose that a second such attractive male figure should appear in one story.

Numerous illustrations might be cited of this fault—that of importing into the contemporary English drama that pleasing fault of pre-realistic English fiction: imperfect objectivity. The subjective note is an intrusion in all truly realistic literature of narration. The aim of the new technic is to create a perfectly objective illusion for the picture-frame stage, imaginatively for the reader as well as actually for the spectator. If the dramatist is self-conscious his characters step out of the frame and shatter the illusion. The new dramatist, notably Shaw, has performed a genuine service to literature in making the reader forget that his characters are fictions of the stage; but he sometimes cancels that service in destroying the illusion he has striven to create by reminding us that these characters are merely the puppets of his own brain.

The consequences which shall inevitably result from the practice of publishing plays in English-speaking countries are destined to be momentous and far-reaching. In the principal countries of Europe the publishing of plays is as much a business as the publishing of other forms of literature. Indeed, the drama is recognized in Europe as an

integral branch of literature, as legitimate a form of art expression as the novel, the short-story, or the sonnet. The consequence, of highest significance for English-speaking countries, of the publishing of plays is the cultivation and creation of a trained body of theater-goers, rendered expert in the art and science of judging plays through reading them. From the modern standpoint, I venture to suggest that there is one new conception of the *ideal spectator:* the intelligent theater-goer who reads plays. The man or woman who acquires the habit of reading plays gradually develops considerable critical faculty in judging plays on their true merits, not only as literature, as "closet drama," but as drama designed for stage production. There is a gradual cultivation of the stereoscopic imagination, the faculty of visualizing the dramatic production, which arises from a perusal of the printed play. The reader learns intuitively to put himself in the place of the dramatist, to grasp the dramatic conception of the piece, and to analyze the emotional reactions in himself. He learns to test the validity and worth of the sensations aroused in himself by the play, unconfused by the subconscious pressure of the crowd-sense felt in the theater. Carried off his feet in the theater by a wave of sentiment induced by the collective consciousness, he may discover afterward, on perusal of the printed play, that

theatrical effects attained in the playhouse stand revealed in the cold accusatory print as having been achieved by means essentially cheap and unworthy. The reader acquires thus some modicum of the true critical and esthetic sense. After seeing a piece in the theater he learns to ask himself, after the manner of Sainte-Beuve: "Was I right to be pleased? Could I have laughed here, applauded there, wept real tears over such cheap manufactured pathos? To think that I should have been thrilled, moved, stirred by such patent tricks, such banal sentiment! Never again!" Thus comes about a gradual readjustment of standards, cultivation of the powers of imagination, elevation of the criteria of criticism. The inanities of the fashionable society comedy, the gross improbabilities of melodrama, the artificialities of the machine-made piece after a time begin to pall upon, and to disgust, the cultivated reader of plays.

Ultimately, the influence thus wrought upon the play-going public reacts in the most direct and beneficial way upon the drama itself. Such cultivated intelligences, such ideal spectators, reject in the theater itself plays which obviously do not measure up to the high standards inculcated in them by the reading of the best plays. A public thus enlightened becomes vastly more exigent than before in its demands for higher and higher forms

of dramatic art. This public thus comes in time to embody a species of collective criticism. The dramatist and the actor, as a direct consequence of the enlightenment of the public by the highest types of dramatic art, react to this new pressure, and are forced to higher standards of craftsmanship and dramaturgy. No longer will the dramatist be able to "hide a poverty of ideas behind the riches of theatrical production, or sterility of imagination behind the stage carpenter, or defective characterization behind the resourceful genius of the actor." No longer will the actor be able to substitute flashy characterization for the temperamental personality projected by the dramatist, or to obscure the author's intent through specious histrionic tricks. The dramatist is ultimately forced toward impeccable technic, deeper characterization, greater consistency of ideas, more authentic emotional denotement. The actor is ultimately forced towards more adequate impersonation, greater naturalness, superior forms of characterization and interpretation. Thus the mutual action and interaction between the enlightened public, on the one hand, the dramatist, and incidentally, the player, on the other, tend toward the persistent elevation of the drama, the improvement of the art of acting, and the creation of a more intelligent, more critical, more cultivated play-going public.

The works of the greater dramatists, both on the stage and in the study, create the very taste indispensable for the advancement of the arts of the drama and of the theater. And, in return, the taste thus created forces the drama up to the standards set by the highest masters of the art. One of the greatest instrumentalities in achieving this progressive evolutional advance of the drama, with all its implications, is, and will more effectively be recognized to be, the publication of plays.

IX

THE NEW CONTENT

"People imagine that actions and feelings are dictated by moral systems, by religious systems, by codes of honor and conventions of conduct which lie outside the real human will. . . . These conventions do not supply them with their motives. They make very plausible *ex post facto* excuses for their conduct; but the real motives are deep down in the will itself. And so an infinite comedy arises in everyday life between the real motives and the alleged artificial motives."—BERNARD SHAW.

THE contemporary era reveals epochal changes in the form of the drama. Along with the evolution in form has proceeded a no less remarkable evolution of subject-matter and content. With the new times have come new ideas, new manners, and, above all, new morals. The actual subject-matter of the drama, a true function of civilization, has taken the very hue and tone of the age in which we live. The modern era, with its leveling democracy, its social accent, its preoccupation with the affairs of the average man, its discovery of the miracle of the commonplace, has ushered into the drama an entirely new range of subjects. The stage, as About aptly puts it, is "a magnifying mirror, in which are reflected the

passions, the vices, the follies of each epoch." In a deeper sense, the drama is not only the mirror which reflects: it is itself the image of the time, of the philosophical, social, political, and religious aspirations of the epoch.

The era of democracy demands the drama in which every-day life shall be universally accepted as the normal dramatic material. If we glance back at the historical evolution of the modern types of both comedy and tragedy, we shall discover once again the dead hand of Aristotle retarding the free experimental evolution of the drama. In the Middle Ages, tragedy was restricted to the lives and careers of princes; and when, in the sixteenth century, Aristotle's *Poetics* first began to exert an important influence in English literature, the mediæval restriction was only further re-inforced. Tragedy, according to Aristotle, is the imitation of a serious action; and this dictum was freely interpreted to apply not only to treatment but to subject-matter. An action, in this view, could only mean one dealing with the illustrious; and the illustrious, before the days of democracy, could only mean those of exalted social rank. The personages and events treated were wholly aristocratic in character; nobility of character was identified—or rather, confused—with nobility of rank. Great events were universally

associated with personages of high station. "Tragedy," as Puttenham quaintly phrased it, "deals with doleful falls of unfortunate and afflicted princes, for the purpose of reminding men of the mutability of fortune and of God's just punishment of a vicious life."

Though Lessing may have felt that *Othello*, *Timon*, and *Romeo and Juliet* marked the transition in England in the direction of treatment of the bourgeois, modern criticism has made it abundantly clear that Shakespeare had neither sympathy for popular rights nor any adequate comprehension of republicanism. It is quite true that Shakespeare frequently satirizes courtiers and mocks at the trappings of royalty; but at bottom he was thoroughly aristocratic in his sympathies. The fact that the vast majority of the characters in Shakespeare's plays belong to the aristocracy or to the leisured classes speaks for itself. And the presumption that Shakespeare was only a conscientious realist in his ruthless depiction of the common people does not suffice to explain away his patent distaste for democracy and his lack of sympathy for the democrat. In Whitman's view, Shakespeare was pre-eminently the poet of courts and princes. Brandes acutely analyzes Shakespeare's attitude in the misrepresentation of the cause of Jack Cade, the memorable omission of the granting of Magna Charta, which history to-

day pronounces the most significant historical event of King John's reign, and the distortion of the ideas of popular liberty in the Roman plays. The late Ernest Crosby ably demonstrated Shakespeare's contemptuous indifference toward the feelings and aspirations of the middle classes. The true transit of popular idealism is found first in George Lillo's *George Barnwell, or the London Merchant* (1713), a momentous departure which left its direct impress upon European, notably French and German, drama in the eighteenth century. The clue to the predominant influence of the bourgeois drama of to-day, from Ibsen and Björnson to Galsworthy and Shaw, is found in the prophetic words of Lillo in his dedication to *The London Merchant:* "What I would infer is this, I think, evident truth; that tragedy is so far from losing its dignity, by being accommodated to the circumstances of the generality of mankind, that it is more truly august in proportion to the extent of its influence, and the numbers that are properly affected by it. As it is more truly great to be the instrument of good to many, who stand in need of our assistance, than to a very small part of that number." This new type of drama, which found its forerunners in *The Yorkshire Tragedy* and *The London Prodigal*, soon gained adherents on the Continent among working dramatists impressed by the fecundity underlying the concep-

tion of what Goldsmith contemptuously described as "tradesmen's tragedies." In Germany, Lessing modeled his *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755) directly on Lillo's type form of the domestic tragedy; whilst in France Diderot, stimulated by Lillo's "tale of private woe," brought out in rapid succession his *Le Fils Naturel* (1757) and *Le Père de Famille* (1758). The influence upon European literature was bifurcative. In France the national genius found characteristic expression in domestic comedy, and the sentimental or larmoyant comedy, of Diderot, Sedaine, Mercier, and Beaumarchais. In Germany, Schiller followed the new path of domestic tragedy in *Kabale und Liebe* (1784), only later to prove recusant; but the success of Iffland and the tremendous popularity of Kotzebue, mechanical and cheap as were their melodramatic exploitations of domestic themes, gave continued vogue to the type, in England as well as in Europe.

So momentous and so universal has been the influence of the democratic spirit in the drama, so intimately is the development of the contemporary drama implicated in the evolution of contemporary democracy, that a somewhat closer survey of the drama of France and Germany of the eighteenth century will reveal the fruitful germs which fertilized the dramatic spirit and temper of today. In the France of the eighteenth century—

familiar invocation!—the aristocracy steadily lost ground, while the bourgeoisie, the third estate, as steadily encroached upon this ground, gaining thereby a new class-consciousness, a sharply quickened sense of social rights. Voltaire, a pronounced opponent of bourgeois tragedy, was a true descendant of Molière in advocating the desirability of making honest folks laugh. The larmoyant comedy, which Voltaire found so admirable, begins with no true recognition of class-consciousness. It was restricted to the sentiments and passions of contemporary life, less violent and excessive than those of classic tragedy because conformed to modern civilization through the normalizing influences of education and social custom. As neatly put by Riccoboni, there are persons of respectable, even gentle birth not lofty enough in station to wear the cothurnus of the tragic hero, but too lofty to enter into the domestic situations traditionally limited to comedy; and it was these persons who furnished the material for the new dramatic type, partaking of the interest of tragedy, yet preserving the character of comedy and dealing with the situations of domestic and civil life. With the iconoclastic spirit worthy of a Barker or a Shaw, Diderot declared that nothing which happened in real life might not be shown on the stage! It is not wholly to be regretted that his practice failed to fulfil the alarming

promise advanced in his theory. For Diderot really wrote, not the true drama of middle-class concern, but more or less artificial studies of certain social conditions and of people of a certain social standing. The outcome of his drama is not the inevitable consequence of its own social data, but a "solution" dexterously devised by the author. In a very genuine sense, however, Diderot was the father of modern realism; for he explicitly maintained in so many words that the drama of the future must abjure the pompous, stylicized language of verse and utilize the supple, natural prose of every-day life. He may be said to have anticipated Ibsen in aiming to create the perfect illusion of reality, so that the spectator would feel that he was himself not only a spectator, but actually a participant in the dramatic action.

Mercier went a step further than Diderot as an exponent of middle-class drama, exhibiting the bourgeoisie in one characteristic and fundamental aspect, viz. as an industrial class. While Mercier advances beyond Diderot, in reflecting the deepened sense of middle-class consciousness, he nevertheless fails in his dramas to exhibit social forces as the controlling factors in the action. It was a grave error to write dramas which did not truly reflect actual conditions, but served principally as justifications, vindications of the social

ideals of the bourgeoisie. The creator of the bourgeois drama in France is Sedaine; and his *Le Philosophe sans le Savoir* portrays artificial social convention in mortal conflict with instinctive human feeling. With all his imperfections as a dramatist, Sedaine is the forerunner of the social dramatist of to-day, who paints the true conflict of modern life as the struggle of humanity against the hampering restrictions of convention and the oppressive influence of institutionalism.

The France of the eighteenth century was aristocratic and absolutist; and literature served but as a reflection of the spirit of the age. For despite the rising of the tide of democracy, art remained aristocratic in tone; and France continued to regard herself as the aristocrat of European literature and so, obligated to conserve the classic esthetic standards of decorum, of form, of taste. In Germany, on the other hand, the spirit of national culture was essentially democratic in its aspiration. The bourgeoisie gradually organized itself into a compact body of democratic tendencies, with a consequent development of the spirit of class-consciousness and the sentiment of common aims. The repression of the individual, exercised by the numerous petty courts of *soi-disant* kingdoms, aroused to revolt the mass-consciousness of the people, and gradually evoked clamant expression of the spirit of the modern era. A re-

generative spirit, the active moral sympathy implicit in Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson*, sank deep into the hearts of the people. For herein they recognized the epitome of their own awakening, not yet wholly aroused, class-consciousness. It deserves to rank, on this score, as the first German drama fundamentally social in character. The true herald of Ibsen and the modern school is, however, not Lessing, but Hebbel, the author of the "little family picture," as he entitled it, *Maria Magdalena*. Indeed Ibsen once expressed his astonishment over the noteworthy recognition of his own dramas in Germany, a country in which Friedrich Hebbel had preceded him. Yet after all, it is not so strange—since Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena*, for example, is much too restricted in its field to constitute an image of modern society. It is just as well that Hebbel soon abandoned bourgeois tragedy; for he labored under the strange delusion that the limitations and restrictions peculiar to the narrowing conditions of middle-class life give rise, not to the tragic, but only to the pathetic. He maintained that the bourgeois type must be studied from within in order to emphasize the unique and particular characteristics of middle-class life: "the rigid exclusiveness with which the individuals, wholly incapable of dialectics, stand opposed to one another in the restricted

sphere, and their consequent horrible enslavement to an existence of arrested development." To-day, we acknowledge that it is to the lower classes, rather than to the middle classes, that Hebbel's dictum is truly pertinent.

It was reserved for the contemporary naturalists, Hauptmann and his successors, to realize the tragedy of middle-class and lower-class life partially envisaged by Hebbel. I know no more just epitome of Hebbel's words, above quoted, than Hauptmann's *Fuhrmann Henschel.* And I am inclined to think that Spitta's dramaturgic code, as reflected in the diatribe of Hassenreuter in Hauptmann's *Die Ratten,* sums up in briefest compass the spirit of contemporary dramaturgy:

HASSENREUTER.

"You deny the whole art of elocution, the value of the voice in acting! You want to substitute for both the art of toneless speaking! Further you deny the importance of action in the drama and assert it to be a worthless accident, a sop for the groundlings! You deny the validity of poetic justice, of guilt and its necessary expiation. You call all that a vulgar invention—an assertion by means of which the whole moral order of the world is abrogated by the learned and crooked understanding of your single magnificent self! Of the heights of humanity you know

nothing! You asserted the other day that, in certain circumstances, a barber or a scrubwoman might as fittingly be the protagonist of a tragedy as Lady Macbeth or King Lear!

SPITTA.

(*Still pale, polishing his spectacles.*) Before art as before the law all men are equal, sir.

It was Ibsen and Björnson who first made true tragedies of middle-class life—the tragedies of the "barber and the scrubwoman," the doctor and the photographer, the banker and the politician. Then for the first time in history the bourgeois drama began to present a serious study of the individual as citizen, bound in a league of common interest with his fellows and of true obligations to society. The rise of the bourgeois drama in the nineteenth century marks the true transvaluation in modern social philosophy. The common weal became the new social standard of valuation. It was not types as types, or classes as classes, that Ibsen treated: he studied individuals as corporate exponents of contemporary ideas. Ibsen's genuine social significance inheres in his practice of studying middle-class society on its own plane, but in terms of the highest thought, the deepest consciousness, of our epoch. He vitalized thought into action; impersonated social thought in humanity. Von Sonnenfels once said,

in speaking of this democratization of the theater, that whereas lofty classic tragedy concerns itself with the interests of a comparatively limited class, numerically, the middle-class tragedy concerns itself with the interests of the entire human race. Ibsen subtilized the topical into the eternal, the specific into the universal.

The contemporary drama of middle-class existence, to employ a happy phrase of George Eliot's, is nothing more than a "scene from private life." Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* has always seemed to me to be a typical specimen of the modern domestic play, exposing the "skeleton in the closet" and denuding the "secrets of the alcove." Admirable illustrations of the bourgeois drama, by dramatists of different nationalities, are: the masterpiece of Sudermann, *Heimat*, the very title of which suggests the domestic scene; Giacosa's *Come le Foglie*, that subtle analysis of the moral enervation consequent upon the irresponsible possession of unearned wealth; Barker's detailed and microscopic study of an English family, *The Voysey Inheritance*. It cannot be doubted that the influence of the first truly realistic novels, dealing with the affairs of people quite commonplace in every respect, save that of human interest and passion, gradually made itself felt in the domain of the drama. The author of *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe* was a virtual contem-

porary of the author of *George Barnwell, or the London Merchant.* And whilst Lillo exerted a powerful direct influence upon the drama, Richardson with his pedestrian realism and middle-class preoccupations exercised upon modern drama an indirect influence well-nigh as powerful, though far less immediate and obvious. Here were all the marks of the contemporary drama as we know it, though blurred by the meticulous elaboration of Richardson, the boisterous vulgarity of Fielding, the sentimental confessional of Rousseau. These works of realistic fiction deal with ordinary people concerned in the affairs of ordinary daily life; they are devoted to a faithful representation, without romantic sophistication or idealization, of the actualities of life and character; and their chief interest consists in a minute analysis of character, delineation of motive, and reflection of the secret springs of the actions of the average human being. These are the conspicuous and characteristic features of the middle-class drama of our own time. To-day, that "literature of the center," of which Matthew Arnold spoke, seems to be yielding place more and more to what may be termed the literature of the circumference. The charge triumphantly urged against Ibsen by the "old guard" in literature was that he is provincial, parochial, suburban; that he deals with ordinary common people in average daily life; that he has

definitively doffed the purple pall of tragedy. In this assertion inheres the secret of Ibsen's distinction, the note of his social dramas of modern life. As Bernard Shaw effectively says: "Suburbanity at present means modern civilization. The active, germinating life in the households of to-day cannot be typified by an aristocratic hero, an ingenuous heroine, a gentleman forger abetted by an Artful Dodger, and a parlor maid who takes half-sovereigns and kisses from the male visitors. Such interiors exist on the stage and nowhere else. . . . But if you ask me where you can find the Helmer household, the Allmers household, the Solness household, the Rosmer household, and all the other Ibsen households, I reply, 'Jump out of a train anywhere between Wimbledon and Haslemere, walk into the first villa you come to, and there you are. . . . This suburban life, except in so far as it is totally vegetable and undramatic, is the life depicted by Ibsen. Doubtless some of our critics are quite sincere in thinking it a vulgar life, in considering the conversations which men hold with their wives in it improper, in finding its psychology puzzling and unfamiliar, and in forgetting that its bookshelves and its music cabinets are laden with works which did not exist for them, and which are the daily bread of young women educated very differently from the sisters and wives of their day. No won-

der they are not at ease in an atmosphere of ideas and assumptions and attitudes which seem to them bewildering, morbid, affected, extravagant, and altogether incredible as the common currency of suburban life. But Ibsen knows better. His suburban drama is the inevitable outcome of a suburban civilization (meaning a civilization that appreciates fresh air): and the true explanation of Hedda Gabler's vogue is that given by Mr. Grant Allen: 'I take her in to dinner twice a week.'"

The drama typical of our day and time is bourgeois in character, dealing with the thoughts and passions, the loves and hates, the comedies and tragedies, of the sort of people we meet every day on the street. They are people with like passions as ourselves, and the incidents of their lives are constantly being reproduced around us. The anecdotes and adventures which constitute the material of the earlier drama have lost their hold upon the modern world because they no longer furnish us that thrill of immediate actuality, that vital interest of contemporaneous circumstance, which live only in the atmosphere of to-day. Nowadays, we are given a species of family portrait—the portrayal of a household or a restricted social set; and the primary demand is that the illusion of reality must never be sacrificed to the specious claims of mere theatrical effectiveness. The error in the earlier dramatic criticism lay in

the assumption that daily normal life was strangled in the coil of the temporal. Ibsen and Björnson centered the vast interests of life, social sympathy, individual passion, prenatalism and predestination, in the restricted arena of domestic life. The following words of Maeterlinck, beautiful as they are, nevertheless suggest too quiescent and static a state: for even within a small room, chasms deeper than hell itself may yawn; and the windows ever open out upon the celestial blue, radiant of eternal hope and mystic with the breath of infinity. "Consider the drama that actually stands for the reality of our time, as Greek drama stood for Greek reality, and the drama of the Renaissance for the reality of the Renaissance. Its scene is a modern house; it passes between men and women of to-day. The names of the invisible protagonists—the passions and ideas—are the same, more or less, as of old. We see love, hatred, ambition, jealousy, envy, greed; the sense of justice and idea of duty: pity, goodness, devotion, piety, selfishness, vanity, pride, etc. But, although the names have remained more or less the same, how great is the difference we find in the aspect and quality, the extent and influence, of these ideal actors! Of all their ancient weapons, not one is left them, not one of the marvelous moments of olden days. It is seldom that cries are heard now; bloodshed is rare, and tears not

often seen. It is in a small room, round a table, close to the fire, that the joys and sorrows of mankind are decided. We suffer or make others suffer; we love, we die, there in our corner; and it were the strangest chance should a door or window suddenly, for an instant, fly open beneath the pressure of extraordinary despair or rejoicing."

Modern realism incisively tends to shatter the romantic cast of life. The most radical change, far-reaching and revolutionary, has come about as the direct consequence of the suburbanization of the drama. This I have chosen to describe as the degeneration of the hero. Perhaps it would be more contemporaneously accurate to say, the abolition of the hero. According to the critical canons of the past, the hero must be a personage of consideration, of distinction—"an ideal character in an ideal situation," if I may be permitted to quote the ridiculous phrase. This was the doctrine of centuries distinguished for dramatic criticism—the doctrine of Corneille, of D'Aubignac, of Racine, of Voltaire, of Dacier, of Sir Philip Sidney. In the elevated tragedies of the past, the hero is a personage above the law, i.e. he functions without the domain of prevailing social and moral codes. It is not with institutions that he has to struggle: it is with destiny. This hero towers aloft upon a pedestal; but that pedestal may rest upon the curved backs of oppressed hu-

manity. This ancient conception is an esthetic reflection of the aristocratic régime; for the classic hero ("*noblesse oblige*"!) owes allegiance only to his own class. In his world there is no democracy, since there is no sense of universal obligation to the community.

To-day, in the light of the sociologic conception of society as an organism, a new transvaluation of individual and social values has transpired. Down to the nineteenth century—the age of Carlyle—the individual, the hero, was supposed to exert a predominant influence in the creation and shaping of society. To-day—the age of Spencer—it is society which predetermines and restricts the development of the individual. Instead of the hero of the past finally conquering every foe, we have to-day the hero *manqué*, struggling with foredoomed futility against the overwhelming pressure of environment, the brand of heredity, the coil of circumstance, the chains of character, the confining mold of society, the damning verdict of self-mockery and self-contempt. The protagonist in both novel and drama has stepped down from the pedestal of the colossal; he has now "lost the last gleam from the sunset of the heroes." "Down to the time of Dickens," says Gilbert Chesterton, "we have the first walking gentleman, the young man carrying with him a certain ancestral light and atmosphere of legend. And, about

the time of Dickens's later work, that light fades into the light of common day. The first great creation of the new manner in England is the character of Arthur Pendennis. This is the young man lit from head to foot suddenly with the white light of realism, all the red lamps of legend being extinguished around him."

In the drama of to-day, the leading male character—it would be profoundly absurd to dignify him with the title of "hero"— is often little elevated above the level of the commonplace, and in many cases is little more or less than a fraud, an impostor, a bounder, a cad, an exemplar of the higher rascality or the new immorality. In the *Dramatic Review* (May 30, 1885), Wilde characteristically wrote: "Perfect heroes are the monsters of melodramas, and have no place in dramatic art. Life possibly contains them, but Parnassus often rejects what Peckham may welcome." A vein of real prophecy, in anticipation of the *Alias Jimmy Valentine* and *Raffles* of to-day, crops out in his added remark: "I look forward to a reaction in favor of the cultured criminal." The moral predisposition of the contemporary dramatist often makes the protagonist a ridiculous, a pitiable, or even a sinister figure, satirizing himself by outraging the conscience of the spectator every time he does his "duty." In a profound sense, Hamlet is a foreshadowing of the protago-

nist of ultra-modern drama; and in another generation, perhaps, dissatisfaction with conventional morality, tempered by educational improvement in ethical standards, may give place to individual moral assertiveness and dignity in the domain of the new-heroic. Nora swings too far away from Helmer, Dr. Stockman from his brother Peter, Marchbanks from Morell, Tanner from Ramsden; the contrasts are, psychologically, almost grotesque. Obsessed by polemical intent and reformatory zeal, the modern dramatist has charged his product with mordant comic and tragic irony. The rise of modern feminism has contributed in no small measure to demote man from his position of vaunted superiority as a heroic figure. Such plays as Mr. W. C. DeMille's *The Woman* and Mr. George Middleton's *Nowadays* give us a strong sense of the new domain of woman. The protagonist in the contemporary drama has lost his poise through the violence of his reaction against social injustice; or become a lay figure, the dialectic automaton for the expression of social theory. Always we tend to see man nowadays from the blasting point of view of the modern woman, catching "glimpse after glimpse of himself from this point of view himself, as all men are beginning to do more or less now, the result, of course, being the most horrible dubiety on his part as to whether he is really a brave and chivalrous gentleman or

a humbug and a moral coward." Only in a highly developed society—a society where women are placed upon an equal footing with men, as Meredith puts it—can comedy of the highest type flourish. And if I were to venture a prophecy, I should predict that the drama of the twentieth century will exhibit two main streams of tendency. The one will present woman's struggle to effect sane adjustments within her new and progressively enlarging freedom; the other will present man's struggle to realize his potentiality and limitation in the light of the newer social communism.

And yet we must not forget, as Spitta said, that the great contribution of the new dramatist has been the demonstration that "a barber or a scrubwoman could as fitly be the subject of tragedy as Lady Macbeth or King Lear." A great gulf has been fixed between aristocratic estheticism and democratic humanism. How antiquated sound the words of Courtney: "There may be tragedies in South Hampstead, although experience does not consistently testify to the fact; but at all events, from the historic and traditional standpoint, tragedy is more likely to concern itself with Glamys Castle, Melrose Abbey, Carisbrook, or even with Carlton House Terrace." How antiquated!—in face of Hauptmann's noble saying: "Before art as before the law all men are equal."

The hope for the individual hero of the drama

of the future lies in the domain of moral psychology,—or shall we say, ethics? In speaking of the protagonist of contemporary drama, the unsympathetic Courtney has observed: "Instead of being a nobleman, or at least distinguished, he has become merely bourgeois; instead of knowing that whatever he suffers is accurately proportioned to his guilt, and that he is the victim of poetic justice, he has become lost in mazes of indiscriminate action, succeeding and failing, he knows not why, subject to the most marvelous coincidences, 'a foiled, circuitous wanderer' in an unreasonable world." The modern "hero" is a failure, as I see it, because he is frustrated on every hand by the savage irony of relentless fact—the insufficiency of his moral code, the mockery of his introspection, the discrepancy between deductions and facts, callous popular indifference to social evil, the lethargy of civic conscience, the weakening of religious influence, the bankruptcy of theology, the consuming curse of materialism, the irresistible pressure of the biological and the social organisms. Perhaps this degenerescence of masculine heroism partially serves to explain why it is that the truly heroic rôles in contemporary drama are so often played by women. In drama, as in novel and short-story, we may well look happily forward with Chesterton to the future work of genius which shall project against a skyline of

infinity "a psychological Hercules," and "show us that there is potentially a rejection for every temptation, a mastery for every mischance, much as there is a parry for every stroke of the sword."

Not only is the hero shorn of his ancient attributes, in modern drama; he is actually robbed of all the accessories which once went so far toward creating the illusion of heroism. The hero of romance accomplished miracles, performing impossible and unheard-of deeds of skill and daring; and he always spoke in the language befitting his station and his achievements. He lived in a world of romance and of dreams; and man fled to the theater to breathe this intoxicating ozone for one brief hour, forgetful of the cares of the morrow, oblivious of every reminder of the real world. And so, when the spectator was swept away to this airy dreamland upon the sea-coasts of Bohemian fancy, he reveled in the elevated, poetic, sublime speech of a race more heroic, more lofty, than the race of mortals. But to-day, suburban realism alas! has changed all that. No longer do we "hear the Scythian Tamburlain threatening the world with high astounding terms." The protagonist of the modern drama is taken alive from the midst of modern life; his actions and his mode of expression are alike typical of this unromantic and unheroic age in which we live. Yet, after all, where

is the man "with soul so dead" as to deny the existence of true heroism in modern life, the age of Peary and Scott, of Orville and Wilbur Wright, of the *Titanic* disaster—and of the Carnegie Hero Medal? It would appear, at times, as if there were an economic and socialistic basis for the rise of the bourgeois drama. For is it not the captain of industry, the commercial colossus, often overriding principles of justice and flouting the mechanism of human laws, rather than any constitutional or despotic ruler, who is, if there be any, the "hero"—i.e. the dominant, masterly protagonist in the drama of contemporary life? A Cecil Rhodes lived more vital dramas than were devised by Ibsen or Björnson—was a more imperial expansionist, a more impressive personality, than perhaps any sovereign of his day.

There will be a transvaluation of values, from time to time, which, I dare say, will eventuate in the successive re-handling of the heroes of classical antiquity, and in general, of the past. It is coming to be recognized that Mommsen and Ferrero have reconstituted ancient Rome and realized the Roman "hero" more accurately and more convincingly than did ever Shakespeare, or even Plutarch. Forbes-Robertson gently asks: "Why should the hero of classical antiquity always be thought of as strutting round with arm extended, indulging in bombastic rant and spouting a lot of

blank verse?" Building upon the basis of vast and far-reaching historical researches, the future dramatist promises to re-interpret the past, in realistic treatment and in the prose form. The epic spirit is dead—slain by reality. The day of spectacular, heroic, external action seems to be waning. The modern drama is marked by that creeping paralysis of external action of which Maeterlinck speaks. The interpreter of contemporary life has discovered that an emotion is as thrilling a dramatic theme as an action; and that passion is as deep and vital in its repression as in its exhibition. To-day, the protagonist is profoundly concerned with the importance of the trivial; and his language—sometimes even his thought—barely suffices to elevate him above the mean level of the commonplace. The difference between the old epic poets and the modern realists is the whole difference "between an age that fought with dragons and an age that fights with microbes."

If the dominant individuality has ceased, in great measure, to play his heroic, epic rôle in contemporary drama, there is a sense in which the "hero" may be said to survive. The typical bourgeois drama of to-day, the forerunner of countless others cut after the same pattern, is Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People.* Back of Stockmann seems to loom a vast impersonal force, the consciousness of social obligation. We live to-

day in an era of social democracy. It is no longer the individual, but the social forces that he represents, which constitute the dominant influence in the higher dramas of our time. Ibsen, Björnson, Brieux, Hauptmann, Gorky, Shaw have accustomed us to the notion that mass-consciousness, rather than individuality, is the most impressive, and most pervasive, influence of our time. The "hero" of *Die Weber* is no single artisan, but the spirit of the laborers' strike—the dread cloud of want darkening the face of the sun. Social altruism strikes the pitch of *Little Eyolf;* the true protagonist of *A Doll's House* is modern marriage; the garish, futile hopelessness of the submerged tenth leers at us from *The Night Shelter.* The spirit of the Celtic race, the tragedy of fettered nationalism, speaks in Sibylline tones from *John Bull's Other Island;* not Broadbent and Doyle, but England and Ireland, are protagonist and antagonist in the death-struggle of nations. The cosmic "villain" of *Maternité,* of *Mrs. Warren's Profession,* is not a personality, but a force—the social evil. The drama of to-day reflects the social consciousness of the epoch of Rousseau, of Karl Marx, of Socialism. Society has ceased to take itself for granted; all our efforts, consciously or unconsciously, are aimed at social amelioration, social regeneration. The artist of the past gave the

name of the hero to his artistic creation—*Ivanhoe*, or *Wallenstein*. Under the influence of the same motive, the modern artist names his artistic creation after its hero—*Fécondité*, or *Justice*. Adverting to the absence of any individual hero in his *Sebastopol*, Tolstoy significantly insists: "But the hero of my story whom I love with all the powers of my soul, whom I have striven to reproduce in all his beauty, and who always has been, is, and will be beautiful, is Truth." At the end of Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*, the spirit of truth and freedom is pronounced the true hero of the drama. The dread of death and the unknown which it veils is the "dominant" in the dark dramas of Andreyev. In *Peer Gynt*, Ibsen has given us for hero the universal man, in search of his own soul. In *Faust*, Goethe offers to the world a hero who is nothing less than all humanity.

In still another sense, there is a reason for the degeneration of the individual heroic rôle. The temper of modern art is atmospheric. The modern drama has begun to assume many of the aspects of the dramatized short-story. The prime requisite of the short-story is economy of means in the achievement of a predetermined effect. All the narrative lines are concurrent, not parallel: the interest is at once cumulative and convergent. Not action, not character, is the primary consideration: the predominant issue is

the creation of a certain mood, a unity of impression, or as Poe phrased it, a "totality of effect." In dramas, similar in tone to the short-story, there is no individual hero—since a hero implies at once overtopping dominance of either character or action, or both. The real "hero" or predominant influence of the drama may be an impersonal, intangible force or emanation, casting over the whole scene the glamour of its influence or darkening the picture with the shadow of its sable wings. In characteristic no-plot dramas of the Maeterlinck of the earlier matter, there is no hero, no dominant personality; for behind all the mimic show of the material there lurk the forces which are immaterial and supersensible. In both *L'Intruse* and *L'Intérieure*, which are really treatments of the same theme viewed from without and within, the hero is Death. In Strindberg's remarkable play, *Wetterleuchten*, the very title of the piece indicates that the real "hero" is no personality, but the electrically charged atmosphere of storm. The healing pity, the saving grace of true Christianity might be termed the protagonist of Hauptmann's *Hannele*. Not *Uncle Vanya*, but the monotony of despair is the "hero" of Tchekhov's remarkable play of that name. Without pressing the point, it suffices to point out that there is no question here of confusing the predominant force of a drama with

its mere setting or local color. Indeed, the modern craftsman has demonstrated the really new principle that atmosphere, mood, *Stimmung*, may actually constitute the essential feature, the predominant influence in a drama—may indeed constitute the drama. The short-story, and even the novel exhibit this modern cast of thought and esthetic temper, no less signally than the drama, especially the one-act play or the play of intensive treatment, designed for the intimate theater. In Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, in Kipling's *They* and *An Habitation Enforced*, the setting is the protagonist, the leading motive—beside which all else pales.

The new spirit of disillusionment in modern thought, the spirit which abolishes the individual hero, discards verse as a medium, and displaces romance in favor of a "scientific natural history," has markedly affected that ancient principle of the drama, sovereign throughout many centuries, the principle of poetic justice. This time, as is quite natural, we must go to the ethicist, Plato, rather than to the esthetician, Aristotle, for the deliberate promulgation of the doctrine. In the ideal commonwealth of his conception, Plato logically insisted, in the interest of law and order, that the good should be rewarded and the wicked punished. Aside from this purely legal aspect of the case, Plato as ethicist vigorously held up justice

as the *summum bonum;* and he is speaking entirely in character, as a critic of the arts, in his *Republic* when he says that poets and story-tellers "are guilty of making the gravest misstatements when they tell us that wicked men are often happy, and the good miserable; and that injustice is profitable when undetected, but that justice is a man's own loss, and another's gain—these things we shall forbid them to utter, and command them to sing and say the opposite." And Plato in his *Laws* even goes so far as to foreshadow the more modern idea of poetic justice in insisting that it is the civic duty of a poet to teach that justice is the source of happiness, and that he whose wealth passes that of Midas and is yet unjust, can only be wretched and miserable.

This conception of poetry as a social force in civilization, it must be pointed out, was really foreign to the theory of Aristotle, who held "that poetry is an emotional delight." Quinlan has convincingly shown that Aristotle, in his limited yet searching analysis of Athenian drama, was not interested primarily in the question of justice, but in the artistic means by which the emotions of pity and fear are to be aroused. It is abundantly clear that Aristotle did not enunciate the principle of poetic justice as a fundamental principle of the drama. From his view of the tragic hero as a man who suffers a reversal of

fortune not through vice, but because of some striking human frailty, ensues the logical consequence, that this virtually good man, instead of being rewarded, shall suffer shipwreck. The idea of a perfectly good man brought from prosperity to adversity, or of a conspicuously evil man passing from adversity to prosperity, was equally shocking to Aristotle as a subject for dramatic art. The principle of poetic justice—"an opposite catastrophe for the good and for the bad"—Aristotle only grudgingly accepts in a spirit of concession to popular taste, while expressly stating that a spectacle exhibiting this principle does not procure "the true tragic pleasure." With that large perception of human emotion in the crowd which gives depth and carrying power to the *Poetics*, Aristotle is ready enough to acknowledge the human weakness we all share in rejoicing over the success of the good, and taking a keen satisfaction in the frustration of the evil.

The development of the drama in Europe down to the time of Shakespeare exhibits steady evolution toward the fixation of poetic justice as a principle of the drama. In England, for example, as the result of the Puritan spirit, the ethical influence of the drama as a social institution, rather than its fundamental esthetics, was persistently kept in the foreground; and in time the critics and playwrights, sensitive to this moral

pressure, resolved, as a means of casting off the stigma of immorality resting upon all stage spectacles, to approve and to write only those dramas which exhibit a symmetrical disposition of rewards and penalties. Gascoigne sub-entitled *The Glasse off Government*, a "*tragicall comedie*" for a specific reason: "because therein are handled as well the reward for virtues as also the punishment for vices"; and George Whetstone, in the Dedication to his *Historye of Promos and Cassandra* (1578), most quaintly says: "For by the reward of the good the good are encouraged in wel doinge—and with the scourge of the lewde the lewde are feared from evill attempts: mainetayning this my opinion with Platoes auctority." In a remarkable passage in his *Apologie for Poetrie* (1581), Sidney rather naïvely accepts as fundamental the principle of poetic justice, which had by that time already become traditional. And the philosophical foundation for the principle is adequately laid by Bacon in his *Advancement of Learning* (1605), when he defines the ideal nature of poetry in contrast to the moral inconclusiveness of real life; as he finely sets it forth, while "history propoundeth the successes and issues of actions not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice," poetry, which he calls "feigned history," "feigns them more just in retribution and more according to revealed providence."

The long conflict of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries over the principle of poetic justice—the wabbling of Dryden, the restricted yet logical views of the unconscious humorist, Rymer, who but followed the lead of Rapin, the vaporings of that ludicrous extremist, Dennis, the revolt of Addison against the "ridiculous doctrine of Modern Criticism"—seems to the "man in the street" of to-day to be nothing more than a "hurricane in a *demi-tasse*." The true modern note in criticism first sounds from the "Great Cham" of literature, Dr. Johnson, who originally upheld, but later renounced, the principle of poetic justice. In his *Life of Addison*, he anticipates in some measure our contemporary attitude in the words: "Whatever pleasure there may be in seeing crimes punished and virtue rewarded, yet, since wickedness often prospers in real life, the poet is certainly at liberty to give it prosperity on the stage. For if poetry has an imitation of reality, how are its laws broken by exhibiting the world in its true form? The stage may sometimes gratify our wishes; but if it be truly 'the mirror of life,' it ought to show us sometimes what we are to expect."

To-day, in the light of a thousand forces more subtle and more profound than were ever realized by the critics of an earlier time, the theory of poetic justice, in its literal interpretation, has

suffered a serious decline, if not a complete eclipse. The contemporary realist, drawing "the thing as he sees it" for men and women in a world of "things as they are," dispassionately rejects the symmetrical system of rewards and punishments, in its literal aspects, recognizing therein a characteristic symptom of the primitive. The doctrine of poetic justice is as inhuman as its ancient analogue, the law of the Medes and Persians: "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." To-day we accept, with all its mystery, its pity, and its terror, "the riddle of the painful earth." It is typical of the modern spirit to face the immitigable facts of life with a certain firm, courageous composure. We need be neither pessimists nor cynics to share the mood of Thomas Hardy: to make the most we can

"Of what remains to us amid this brake Cimmerian
Through which we grope, and from
Whose thorns we ache,
While still we scan
Round our frail faltering progress for some path or plan."

With vision no longer hallowed by the mirage of romance, unilluded by the vagaries of a deceptive faith, people of to-day have come to look unshrinkingly upon the garish facts of an unintelligible world. Around us, upon all sides, we see injustice, cruelty, unmerited suffering. Unto the third and fourth generation are the innocent

penalized for the frailty of their fathers; the deterministic pressure of social institutions, the tyranny of capital, the inertia of civic consciousness, the very constitution of society leave in their wake suffering, injustice, visiting alike upon the good and the evil inequality in the conditions of living, poverty, disease, and death. Outside the organized instrumentalities for the administration of justice, we recognize in the world no intentional justice. The author of *Romeo and Juliet* was a true modern in the recognition of chance as a determinant of fate. In our own time, poetic justice died with Ibsen's last concession to the ancient theatricality, in *The Pillars of Society*. In the physical realm, the connection between conduct and consequences, recognized by Ibsen, Hauptmann, and other modern dramatists who have treated the physiological subject of heredity, exists only in the most haphazard, erratic, and purposeless way. *Hedda Gabler* is Ibsen's ruthless answer to the classic dogma that the tragedy, willed by "poetic justice," shall be hallowed by the consolations of beauty; and in *The Wild Duck* Relling, the high-priest of disillusionment, sounds the tocsin of revolt in his memorable phrase: "Life would be quite tolerable, after all, if only we could be rid of the confounded duns that keep on pestering us, in our poverty, with the claim of the ideal."

The outworn idea of poetic justice is yielding place nowadays to the infinitely more lofty ideal of courageous loyalty to the obligations of life. Nature has no morality: death, as Weismann put it, is only another means of economizing life. The poor are consoled for the injustice of their destitute state in this world by the preacher's assurance that they will receive in the next an exceeding great reward. But the drama, which reflects life, is limited after all to this mundane sphere; and the consolations of prophecy avail not to enable us to meet the inevitable obligations of existence.

> "Under the bludgeonings of Chance
> My head is bloody, but unbowed——"

that is the true, high spirit of our time. We thank whatever Gods may be for our unconquerable souls—recognizing that justice rests, not upon any poetic principle, but within ourselves. We know now that things will not come out right in the long run unless we ourselves labor to that consummate end. Contemporary literature, no matter of what type, progressively exhibits the faith of the pragmatic modern man that we shall create a world where justice reigns only when we ourselves shall embody that justice. The new content of contemporary life and art is epitomized in the two words: Social conscientiousness.

In the words of a great prophet of the new social idealism in art: "However differently in form people belonging to our Christian world may define the destiny of man; whether they see it in human progress in whatever sense of the words, in the union of all men in a socialistic realm, or in the establishment of a commune; whether they look forward to the union of mankind under the guidance of one universal Church, or to the federation of the world—however various in form their definitions of the destination of human life may be, all men in our times already admit that the highest well-being attainable by men is to be reached by their union with one another."

X

THE NEWER TENDENCIES

"The only subject-matter of the art of the future will be either feelings drawing men towards union, or such as already unite them; and the forms of art will be such as will be open to every one. And therefore, the ideal of excellence in the future will not be the exclusiveness of feeling, accessible only to some, but, on the contrary, its universality."—LYOF TOLSTOY.

As we view in perspective the drama to-day in Europe, in Great Britain, and in the United States, we shall not miss the significance of the moment in describing it as the moment of experimentalism. We have witnessed the rise and decline of naturalism, the persistence of realism and its final triumphant domination of the drama as of all other forms of literature, the first groping tentatives of symbolism and mysticism. The period through which we have passed and the period through which we are now passing are distinguished by two remarkable traits. Modern literature is distinguished by evolution in form, revolution in spirit. The motto of the revolution may be found in Ibsen's defiant challenge: "My book *is* poetry; and if it is not it will be." The con-

temporary dramatist boldly affirms that the conception of drama shall be widened, broadened, deepened—shall be made to conform to the practice of modern creative art.

An axiom of dramatic criticism which has remained barren of creative result in the past is the axiom that the drama is the culminating synthesis of all the arts, the esthetic integration of literature, music, painting, and sculpture. The true explanation of the sterility of this axiom is found in the neglect of the dramatist to recognize in the sister arts anything more than auxiliary, ancillary aids in the fortification of emotive, decorative, and plastic effects. In a strictly economic sense, architecture throughout all history has exercised a despotic tyranny over creative individual genius. Investigation now persistently directed toward the drama as a form of art dependent in some measure upon the physical exigencies of the theater is a characteristic feature of contemporary dramatic criticism.

No longer does the dramatic critic venture to consider the drama solely as a branch of literature. Modern research and the spirit of contemporary experimentalism compel the recognition of the drama as, in the mathematical sense, a function of the theater. The fertile germs of the modern spirit are found in the subtle analysis of Lodovico Castelvetro, the Italian critic of the

Renascence, who maintained that both the form and content of the drama were conditioned and molded by the architectural environment and the immediate data of representation. The conclusions which he drew therefrom were imperfect and erroneous; but he anticipated contemporary dramatic criticism in recognition of the drama as a form of art in some measure dependent upon the cardinal fact that it is a social transaction, to be presented in public before a representative audience in a given environment and within a specified interval of time. To-day, another great Italian critic, Benedetto Croce, has illuminated with rare clarity the true function of all criticism. In the light of his esthetic, we cannot parry the conclusion that theatric representation of the drama is perhaps the most complex and difficult mode of criticism the arts can supply.

According to Croce, art is pure intuition. The transition from pure intuition to creative achievement is seen in four successive steps. First the artist receives certain impressions, as the result of which he forms a certain spiritual esthetic synthesis; with this expression goes a certain hedonistic accompaniment; and the final step is taken in the translation of the esthetic fact into a physical phenomenon. Criticism is the process inverse to creation. The critic must retrace in inverse order the steps of the creative artist in the creation of

a work of art. From the work of art, the critic receives a certain stimulus; this stimulus expresses itself in the form of perception of the physical facts of the art work, with its essential hedonistic accompaniment. These in turn re-create in the mind of the critic the original spiritual esthetic synthesis; the re-translation of this into descriptive analysis constitutes literary criticism.

In the light of Croce's theories, I should like to stress the fact that in the presentation of a drama, we have the most intricate and complex form of critical reproduction. For in the process of criticism, not one but many factors are involved. And these factors are interrelated in the most intimate ways. The esthetic fact is the drama itself as conceived by the genius of the creative artist. The hedonistic accompaniment or pleasure of the beautiful must be re-created in the mind of the critical interpreter and translated into a physical, mimetic, oral reproduction of the dramatic creation.

It is just at this point that emerge the supreme complexities of the problem. The critical interpreter here is not the individual critic, but a group of interpreters, the actors. The hedonistic accompaniment is constituted by means of scenery, the human voice, all the aids of esthetic expression, emotive, decorative, plastic. The physical reproduction of the drama is limited and

conditioned by the physical exigencies of the playhouse. The drama, as a form of critical representation, is the most tentative and experimental of all the arts. The true tragedy of dramatic genius is the realization that all theatric representation is but a mode of esthetic approximation. Shakespeare, Molière, Ibsen suffered the supreme penalty of the dramatic art in never seeing realized upon the stage, in all the subtlety of meaning, the range of intent, the perfection of beauty, the pristine creations of their dramatic fancy. Genius and taste are identical in the final sense that they are respectively the creative and re-creative processes of art. The final limitation of the drama is that the perfect presentation of a dramatic work of genius can never be achieved. For the interpreters can never rise, in their task of interpretation, to the full altitude of the genius nor wholly identify themselves with his spirit.

The cardinal fact, the supreme discovery of modern dramatic criticism, is the full recognition that the drama is limited by the physical form of the theater, the histrionic ability of the players, the co-operative assistance of the auxiliary arts. This discovery is responsible for the esthetic revolution of to-day in the drama. It is this esthetic revolution which is prophetic of the future enlargement and enrichment of dramatic art. Nevertheless contemporary criticism of the

drama, stirred by the significance and fertility of the new discovery, has gone to extremes of generalization on the subject of the influence of architectural structure upon dramatic form and content. Incited by the modern scientific tendency to decry individual volition and to assign paramount importance to the shaping influence of environment, and inspired by the modern critical tendency to supply an economic interpretation of all manifestations of the human spirit, much modern criticism has shattered the true perspective in the inter-relationship of the playhouse and the play.

The drama is a democratic art. This may be, and generally is, casually accepted as a truism. Certainly it is true in the specific sense that dramatic production is a business, a trade, dependent for success upon the suffrage of the public. The playhouse no more determines the form and content of the drama than the "drama's patrons" give the "drama's laws." The most that can be said is that the playhouse, in its physical proportions, is only one of the innumerable influences which "condition" but do not "determine" the form and content of the drama.

The pressure exerted by the creative dramatist in the invention of new forms of art is illustrated by the steady evolution of theatrical accessories in conformity to that pressure. The successive

changes in form and technic, in the history of the drama, are not explicit consequences of the alterations in the form of the playhouse. They may be implicit indications of these alterations. But it must be clearly recognized that they may be equally consequent upon many other forces. Among such forces may be numbered the change in the social temper of the people, the decay of popular interest in traditional legend and story, monarchical or republican tendencies, the growth of democratic sentiment, the change in art ideals. Probably the most potential of all such forces is the creative contribution of the imaginative artist.

We may well believe that the mask was retained on the Greek stage because the actor was too remote from the audience to permit of effective facial mobility. But there is no reason to believe that the form of the theater occasioned its original adoption. The characteristic features of Greek drama were characteristic features of Greek art, of Hellenic thought and religious feelings. The qualities of the statuesque, of massive proportion, of distaste for overt violence are distinctive characteristics of the Hellenic spirit in life and art. It was this spirit which determined the form of the playhouse.

The rhetorical and lyric character of Elizabethan drama is glibly declared nowadays to have been a direct consequence of the platform stage.

It is indubitable, however, that these same characteristics prevailed in Elizabethan literature. Since they constituted the esthetic expression of the spirit of the people, they persisted and prevailed irrespective of the form of the playhouse. Indeed, we may well believe that they would have persisted had there been no playhouses in the Elizabethan era. The "apron" of the post-Elizabethan stage, which persisted for two centuries following the Restoration, afforded the ideal rostrum for the display of all the arts of rhetoric and oratory. Yet we know that wit, dialectic, epigram, and repartee, characteristic of the temper of the time, along with rhetoric and oratory, were distinguishing characteristics of the drama during the latter half of the survival of the "apron" stage. This group of characteristics is unrecognizable as an explicit, or even an implicit, function of the physical conformation of the stage. The picture-frame stage, supposed to conduce wholly to objective and pictorial effects, has been responsible for the eloquent speechmaking of a Stockmann, the fulgurant rhetoric of *L'Aiglon*, the masterly conversational drama of Wilde, the wit, epigram, and dialectic of Shaw, the illusion-shattering conclusions of *Peter Pan*, *The Blue Bird*—and *A Good Little Devil!* The particularistic realism of Fielding, of Richardson, set up a movement in fiction which

in time spread its influence over all forms of narrative art. The study of humanity as a branch of natural history, and not the invention of the picture-frame stage, is responsible for the realistic temper of contemporary dramatic art. Ibsen, striving for "strong realistic coloring," abolished the monologue and the aside in 1869: and this antedated Edison's discovery of the incandescent bulb by a decade, and its general use by a quarter of a century. The "heredity" of a work of dramatic art, equally with, and perhaps more than its "environment," is responsible for changes in the content and form of the drama.

It is indubitably true that the form of the playhouse, the particular type of stage properties, the status of the profession of acting, and many other influences require the playwright to work within limits. In this sense, then, is the drama a concomitant "function" of these things. An original genius like Shaw significantly confesses: "I do not select my methods: they are imposed on me by a hundred considerations: by the physical conditions of theatric representation, by the laws devised by the municipality to guard against fires and other accidents to which theaters are liable, by the economic conditions of theatrical commerce, by the nature and limits of the art of acting, by the capacity of the spectators for understanding what they see and hear, and by the accidental circumstances of the particular produc-

tion in hand." A study of the drama and of the stage of all ages brings to light the almost incredible fact that the alterations in the form of the stage and of the theater have only occasionally been directly dictated by the immediate demands of the dramatist for larger freedom in creation. These changes have been dictated or prompted by considerations, sometimes wholly alien, often at best very imperfectly related, to the real needs of the dramatist as a creative craftsman. It was not as a rule the genius of the dramatist, creating new forms of drama that demanded changed physical environment for their production, which dictated the architectural changes in the playhouse. Imperfect illumination was, it is believed, primarily responsible for the projecting of a curving stage far beyond the frame of the proscenium arch—and not the demand of some "new" dramatist for a stage adapted to the "drama of conversation." It was not the esthetic requirements of Molière, but the economic conditions of acting as a business, which dictated the tennis-court stage. It was not the demand of Augier and Dumas *fils*, but the economic problem of the pressure of population, which compelled the gradual shrinkage and final obliteration of the projecting platform in the middle of the last century.

In the light of the discovery of the real truth

underlying the conception of the drama as the meeting place of all the arts, we behold the emergence of a new figure. It is a figure that promises to work a revolution in the art of the theater and of the drama. This new figure, realizing the hampering restrictions to which the drama of the past has been subjected, has boldly determined to mold the theater to the purposes of the dramatist. No longer shall the drama continue to be subject to, and enslaved by, the exigencies of the playhouse, the poverty of histrionic ability, the woeful artificialities and painful inadequacies of scenic investiture. All the instrumentalities for dramatic production are to be subject to, conditioned upon, the esthetic requirements of the dramatist.

Science and art have at last joined hands. The drama and the theater, for the first time in history, have begun to unite in a true partnership. Science, applying the spirit of experimentalism to the problems of theatrical representation and of playhouse construction, has co-operated with the dramatist in the invention of new methods of illumination, the supplantation of the old footlights with overhead and side illumination, the revolving stage, the artificial horizon, and innumerable other means for the artificial creation of natural illusion. Art, utilizing all the skill of the costumer, the designer, the

painter, in the spirit of esthetic experimentalism, has co-operated with the dramatist in the creation of new instrumentalities, decorative, pictorial, plastic, for achieving the effects sought by the dramatist. In my own experience, the chasmal change is best represented by a comparison of the method of Brahm in the production of an Ibsen play at the Lessing Theater in Berlin and the production of Wagner's *Ring* at the Prinzregenten Theater in Munich. *The Wild Duck*, as presented at the Lessing Theater, notable for the distinction of the acting, was marred by the overelaboration of insignificant scenic detail, the distracting superabundance of commonplace furniture and accessories. *The Ring*, as presented at the Prinzregenten Theater, conspicuous neither for the genius of the acting nor the supremacy of the singing, was memorable for the stage management. All the arts seemed employed for a single end: to realize the leading motives of the music drama, and to co-operate in the production of esthetic unity of impression.

Nature, in its processes, is essentially experimental. A thousand tentative failures is the price of a single success. The new art of the theater is experimental in the same sense. A thousand combinations of esthetic values are tried before the real right one is found. Gordon Craig has defined art as *scientific knowledge*. Surely this is

one of the most revolutionary definitions of art in all history. Craig, Reinhardt, Stanislavsky, Barker have employed all the arts in all phases from the earliest time until to-day, in the effort to achieve the perfect symbol of the drama. The impressionism of Japan, the conventional pictorial hieroglyphics of Egypt and Assyria, the bas-relief of Italy, and the fresco of modern art; the substitution of shadow-perspective on plane relief for solid perspective; the employment of primary colors and mass-effects against a monochrome background; the creation of changes in color through changing lights thrown upon tall dull-toned screens, arranged in varying designs; the employment of the rectangular to suggest towering architecture and vanishing perspective—these are characteristic examples of the methods of the *regisseur* or stage-manager in achieving this new, experimental art of the theater which is no less the new, experimental art of the drama.

Stimmung, said Strindberg—ah! that is Poetry. This is the clue to this art of the future which stands out as the most significant tendency of the contemporary dramatic movement. The aim of all these practitioners of the united arts, however differing their methods, is to grasp the essential spirit of the drama. And having grasped it, then to realize in symbol this prevailing mood,

this atmospheric motif. Rhythm, mobile relief, symbolic interpretation, mass-effect, imaginative decoration—these are some of the instrumentalities by which the new artist is to achieve his esthetic interpretation of the dramatist's design. To the new artist, pure realism is caricature. His design is imaginative not realistic, decorative not graphic. The attention of the spectator is no longer to be distracted by the meticulous realism of the scenery and the historical accuracy of the costumes. His entire attention will be held by the co-operation of all the auxiliary arts in the achievement of the dramatist's emotional design. The ancient weakness of the drama bids fair to be reduced to a minimum. For the day is surely dawning when the dramatist shall become his own *regisseur*. So long as the play of the dramatist is dependent for production upon the artistic temperament of the stage-manager, so long will there lurk that danger of bifurcation of interest on the part of the spectator. The force of the drama may be lost in contemplative admiration of the esthetic genius of the producer. That can only be a rare and fortuitous conjunction when the temperament of the dramatist and the temperament of the producer are in sympathetic and harmonious accord. The coming of the new art widens, as nothing hitherto has ever done, the breach between drama and literature. To achieve

his purpose, to secure his effect, the dramatist of the future must become the true "theater-poet." He must cease to be a mere purveyor of literature, and must become a technical genius of the theater. He must acquire a mastery of the intellectual, emotive, decorative, and plastic media for the visual and aural realization of the dramatic symbol.

The age of realism has done its great work. All art bears its stamp and superscription. It is inconceivable for any period of the immediate future that real life of the day will be presented on the stage without the instrumentality of realistic transcription of reality. The new art of which I have been speaking is essentially imaginative, symbolic, poetic, romantic. It points at once to the past and to the future. Its fundamental weakness is that it has achieved no successful symbolic rendition of the spirit of to-day. And doubtless the reason for this is that the present, the period of prose, of actuality, does not "compose" readily in terms of the imaginative and the symbolic. The present is of all things most evanescent. Stretch out the hand to reach it and it is even to-morrow. Grasp it and lo! it is yesterday. To write of the present is to write of transition. And this age is, of all others, most transitory, because it realizes itself as a link between the ages, and, having no sense of finality, can give

no impression of itself as an entity. There is that within it which is of to-morrow, and of the day after to-morrow, and of the far future. But to-morrow built upon to-day shall be the child of its dreams. The new art has achieved success almost solely in the realm of the drama of the past, or the poetic, symbolic drama of the present —Reinhardt's *Œdipus*, Craig's *Hamlet*, Barker's *A Winter's Tale* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Stanislavsky's *The Blue Bird*. The circumstance may well be prophetic. The drama of the near future, the realization of the new art of the theater and of the drama working in conjunction, gives promise of being a new species of symbolic poetry. It bids fair to be dynamically emotive, vast in scope, cosmic in conception, universal in appeal.

The other great tendency in the drama of to-day, which reveals itself most conspicuously in the English-speaking countries through a series of scattered and uncorrelated movements, is the irresistible tendency toward the organization of the theater as a social force. The national theatrical institutions of France, with State subsidy, the municipal theaters of Germany, the Continental types of repertory theater, have furnished the clue and the starting-point for the re-organization of the theater as an instrumentality for ministering to the social needs of the people. In

the theater of commerce, the drama is regarded solely as a business, a trade; a play is exploited primarily on the basis of its lucrative possibilities. Not conservation but destruction of the drama is the outcome of the policy which takes a play and runs it to death—literally wearing out the play itself and the public by giving the play the longest consecutive run it will endure. The growth of repertory in Great Britain and the United States arises from a recognition that the managerial policy purely commercial, or rather purely mercenary, inevitably results in the exclusion from the theater of countless contemporary plays. A distinctive feature of the modern dramatic movement is the creation of a great variety of plays of a new type, whether of one, three, or four acts, which do not bear the test of the long run. They are calculated to appeal, not to the unthinking crowd, moved solely through the eye and the cruder emotions, but to the more intelligent sections of the modern public animated by the larger social consciousness of the epoch. The great problem which faces the dramatist and the manager of to-day is the finding of the way and the means of enticing once more into the theater the best elements of the public, which have been driven from the theater by the banality of the tone of the commercial play, its deficiency in intellectual speculativeness,

its dependence upon the purely emotional, the theatrical, or even the frankly melodramatic appeal.

Along with this task goes the cognate task of organizing, of educating, the great public—the general run of playgoers, popular supporters of all types of theatric production—by setting up sane, broad, normal standards of estimate and judgment of the current drama. The repertory theaters which have sprung up in Great Britain as the natural outgrowth of the privately conducted organizations for the production of foreign and native dramatic masterpieces and the encouragement of native dramatic talent, such as the Independent Theater, the New Century Theater, the Stage Society, and the Elizabethan Stage Society, testify to the growing sense of the recognition of the necessity for ministering to the esthetic needs of the more cultivated sections of contemporary society. The inauguration of similar organizations in the United States, within the past decade, is a tentative sign of a similar change in sentiment in this regard. Simultaneously, efforts toward the organization of the theater and the drama along national lines, having for ultimate purpose the education of the great public and the gratification of its recreative needs, find embodiment in such significant institutions as the projected Shakespeare Memorial National

Theater in England, and the Drama League of America which has already enlisted the services of the ablest thinkers and constructive workers, in the drama, in the theater, in criticism, which the country affords. The indispensable pioneering work has already begun; large social forces, touching all the esthetic and vital tendencies of the age, have already been set in motion. Behind all these new tendencies lurks the vague, yet hopefully communal, aspiration toward the incorporation into the functions of a democratic state of the fostering, conservation, and support of the drama as a great social institution potentially capable of ministering to the esthetic and recreative needs of a people.

The drama of to-day, through the influences of modern science, of contemporary democracy, of shifting moral values, of the critical rather than the worshipful attitude toward life, of an irresistible thrust toward increased naturalism and greater veracity, has become bourgeois, dealing with the world of every day; comic, verging upon the tearful, or serious, trenching upon the tragic; unheroic, suburban, and almost prosaic, yet intensely interesting by reason of its sincerity and its humanity; essentially critical in tone, proving all things, holding fast that which is good. The contemporary realist has learned to dispense with the outworn theatricalities, the threadbare

conventions which discredit the efficient craftsman. Unity of action, alone of the three unities, survives as an obligatory force; and contemporary creativeness has brought to light a fourth unity, unity of impression. There is to-day no abstract or ideal justice to replace the poetic justice of a more artificial theory of art. Action and exposition proceed hand in hand, or become identical; and the modern drama concerns itself less with material action than with a minute and exhaustive consideration of the motives which prompt to action. Neither conflict nor action is indispensable to the contemporary play; passivity and immobility may constitute its ground tone and motive. The influence of the picture-frame stage, making for perfect objectivity, is offset by the continual recurrence of the personal and the temperamental. Rarer and rarer are becoming the "necessarily artificial poems that arise from the impossible marriage of past and present"; and in the future, reconstitution of past epochs, revitalization of historic episodes and characters, promise to be effected solely through the transmutative media of modern thought and modern philosophy. The drama to-day embodies the social fervor of the epoch. The humanizing influences of fraternal sympathy, of social pity and social justice, are everywhere beginning to replace the pressure of more personal and selfish

interests. The drama is finally losing its character as pure literature; the closet-drama is a bald anachronism. The drama of the future promises to be, in the creative and constructive sense, a synthesis of all the arts. The dramatist of the future bids fair to be the Admirable Crichton in the Romance of Esthetics.

THE END

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